

choice

196
products
reviewed!

HAIR DYES

When "natural" is not good

SHOW ME THE MONEY

Big prices at the big screen

The switch is on!

Team up and get a better deal on your mortgage



**PRODUCT
TESTS**

+ GPS phone apps
+ Washing machines
+ Vacuum cleaners

+ Electric shavers
+ Cordless phones
+ Computer tablets

+ Juicers
+ Dishwashers
+ Strollers



Ready ... set ... switch!

CHOICE Big Bank Switch is an exciting new group initiative that will help you get a better deal on your mortgage.

CHOICE was founded more than 50 years ago with a clear mission – to ensure the voice of consumers is heard, loud and clear.

In August we are launching a new chapter in CHOICE's history, and a new idea into the Australian marketplace. The new chapter is the CHOICE Big Bank Switch campaign, and the idea is group switching.

The CHOICE Big Bank Switch is a campaign to find 1000 Australians who want to switch banks together to get a better deal on their mortgage. Group switching has the power to turn the tables on the relationship between consumers and big businesses. By taking part in this campaign, CHOICE is putting itself at the forefront of consumer movements around the world. We are truly launching a next generation consumer campaign.

In Australia, group switching had its origins in local community-level switching movements. The CHOICE Big Bank Switch will be the first national group switching campaign ever held in this country.

CHOICE has always argued that switching lets consumers save money and get better products and services. Group switching is the next step. By switching banks, electricity companies, or other providers of basic household goods and services together in groups, consumers can demand quality products, with fair terms and conditions, at a genuinely discounted price.

Australia's first national group switching network, One Big Switch, is powering the CHOICE Big Bank Switch. This campaign is a truly innovative opportunity for CHOICE members to get their voice heard, and all Australians are welcome to join the switch.

The CHOICE Big Bank Switch is quick, easy and entirely obligation free. One Big Switch may be paid a commission by successful lenders, and One Big Switch has a cost-sharing arrangement with CHOICE. Any money paid to us will go towards campaigning for the best deals for Australian consumers, freeing up our resources to invest in independent research and analysis of other products and services.

The CHOICE Big Bank Switch is just the beginning of new chapter of campaigning and

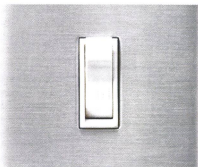
consumer activism for CHOICE. We're determined to keep taking new and innovative steps to help consumers can get better deals. After this first group switch, we will explore similar initiatives for the future. We believe campaigns that unlock the power of group switching, such as the CHOICE Big Bank Switch, will change the nature of consumer-led campaigns for a long time to come.

You can get more information about the CHOICE Big Bank Switch on page 5 of this issue, or by visiting www.bigbankswitch.com.

Nick Stace, CEO

Phone 1800 266 786

Email nick@choice.com.au



CHOICE. The People's Watchdog

CHOICE gives you the power to choose the very best goods and services, and avoid the worst. We pay full price for all the products we test, so we remain 100% independent. We don't take advertising and we don't accept freebies from industry. We're not a government body and our consumer publishing and advocacy is almost entirely funded by subscriptions to our magazines, www.choice.com.au and from other services we supply to benefit members and consumers.

CHOICE product ratings are based on lab tests, expert assessments and consumer surveys. CHOICE staff also research a wide range of consumer services. They reveal the truth behind the facts and figures, and investigate the quality and the claims.

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We've tested low-cost vacs to see which perform well, and which you should avoid. See page 51

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Which ones come close to the razor's edge?



Martha Psiroukis takes vacuum testing seriously

Helmet clash

Australia's mandatory bike helmet laws are effective and should continue, according to a new study.

Following calls to reverse the laws, researchers at the University of New South Wales and the Sax Institute reviewed NSW hospital data and found a 29% fall in bike-related head injuries occurred in the months after the helmet laws were introduced in 1991.

Critics of the laws claim they reinforce the message that cycling is dangerous and discourage people from cycling and its associated health benefits.

A 14.5-year study of more than 6900 people in Denmark (where there are no mandatory helmet rules) found people who cycle for an average of three hours a week had increased longevity.

HANNAH GREW



One step closer to palm oil labelling

Consumers may benefit from the federal opposition's decision to support legislation being considered by parliament that will make labelling of palm oil in all Australian foods mandatory.

Currently, palm oil only needs to be labelled as unspecified vegetable oil. Because it's cheap, manufacturers use palm oil extensively in processed

foods. As a result, Malaysian and Indonesian forests are being cleared at a rate of 300 soccer fields a day to make way for plantations, destroying orangutan habitats and placing them at risk of extinction. CHOICE believes consumers have a right to know whether their food contains palm oil.

Palm oil also offers little good news in terms of health. While some other vegetable oils contain 2% saturated fat, palm oil contains 50%. High levels of saturated fats contribute to raised LDL cholesterol levels and cardiovascular disease.

EMILY MCCLUSKEY



Get social...

Join us on Facebook and Twitter for fun competitions and updates on the products we're testing.



BREAKING NEWS

Oil slide

In light of CHOICE's calls last year for a mandatory Australian standard for olive oils (see *CHOICE*, July 2010, page 38), a voluntary standard has now been introduced. It will define grades of oil as well as clarify and crack down on labelling claims. New labels are currently being designed, and should start to appear on packaging by Christmas. Aldi's olive oil products already comply with the standard, so the challenge is for Coles and Woolworths to come on board too, says Paul Miller, president of the Australian Olive Association.

Bottled BPA

Have you ditched your plastic drink bottle in favour of aluminium to avoid bisphenol A (BPA)? Be warned, recent testing in the US found some aluminium bottles use a plastic or resin lining that leaches more BPA than polycarbonate bottles. The main culprits were the cheapies, so avoid those with a gold-orange lining and make sure it specifies BPA-free.

Baby bling alert

Online retailers continue to sell decorated baby dummies and chains, which have been banned nationally due to the risk of choking, inhalation or ingestion of detached parts.

> CAMPAIGN

The Big Switch is on

This month, CHOICE has helped launch Australia's first national group switching campaign, CHOICE Big Bank Switch, and started a new chapter in our proud history of consumer activism and campaigning.

The CHOICE Big Bank Switch aims to find 1000 mortgage holders willing to switch banks together. It is the first group switch for Australia, and will turn the tables on the relationship between banks and their customers. With the power of the group switch, consumers have more bargaining power to demand a quality mortgage product at a genuinely discounted rate, with fair terms and conditions. Visit www.bigbankswitch.com to register or for more information.

The CHOICE Big Bank Switch is powered by One Big Switch, Australia's first ever group switching network.

"After people have registered, One Big Switch will source special mortgage offers from lenders using the switching power of the registered group," explains One Big Switch's Lachlan Harris.

"One Big Switch will pass on these mortgage offers based on objective criteria, quality of the product, fair

terms and conditions and a genuine group discount. Registered mortgage holders then decide if the offers are right for them, and whether or not to switch," he continues.

Registration is for a limited time only, and it is quick, easy, and obligation free.

CHOICE has always been a passionate believer in the power of switching to deliver real savings for consumers, and group switching is the next big step forward in consumer movements. To be part of the CHOICE Big Bank Switch or to get more information about how it works, visit www.bigbankswitch.com.

ZOYA SHEFTALOVICH

\$1.09 trillion

The amount Australians owe on housing

[Source: ABS May 2011]



Super effective

CHOICE's UK sister organisation, Which?, has gained a super-complaint victory after demanding an investigation by the UK Office of Fair Trading (OFT) into excessive credit and debit surcharges. Which? wanted companies to charge reasonable fees, inform consumers up front about any surcharges and absorb the cost of debit card transactions, which cost retailers no more than 20p.

Having investigated, the OFT is now calling on the UK government to ban surcharges on debit cards – the “almost universal payment method for today’s online consumers”. Traders can impose surcharges for other payment mechanisms such as credit cards, which can be more costly to process, provided they meet minimum transparency requirements set out by the OFT.

CHOICE has joined forces with NSW Fair Trading to pilot a scheme to identify super complaints here. We hope to extend the scheme to other states. Email supercomplaints@choice.com.au if you have a suggestion for a potential super complaint.

KATRINA LEE

ACCC gets tough

The ACCC has secured penalties of more than \$9 million under the Australian Consumer Law in just over 12 months. Optus was the biggest offender, fined \$5.26 million after losing a case about misleading advertising. Yellow Page Marketing BV and Yellow Publishing Ltd were the next biggest, fined \$2.7 million for sending

misleading faxes and invoices for online business directory subscriptions to thousands of Australian businesses.

KATRINA LEE



Apples with Apples

Apple recently reduced Australian app prices to be in line with US prices. But long-noted pricing discrepancies for Apple products are still evident. Apple Australia has previously told CHOICE that local duties, shipping and GST contribute to higher local costs. However, with Apple now selling unlocked iPhones in the US, Australian consumers can compare pricing between the two countries. Excluding taxes, an iPhone4 16GB costs about \$605 (\$US649) from the US Apple Store, but \$781 (before GST) from the Australian store.

SIOBAHN DONOHUE

Donation rates OK

Recent government figures show a 19% increase in organ donation and transplantations in Australia this year compared with the first five months of 2010. The increase follows the Organ and Tissue Authority's OK campaigns.

Family consent must be given for organ and tissue donation to be carried out in Australia. With a family consent rate lower than 60%,

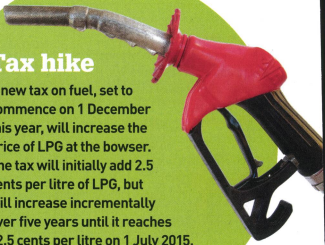
Australians were encouraged to openly discuss their wishes with family.

Last year, 309 organ donors saved and improved the lives of 931 Australians – the highest figures on national record. But our donor rates still lag behind those of Spain, Belgium, France and the US.

HANNAH GREW

Tax hike

A new tax on fuel, set to commence on 1 December this year, will increase the price of LPG at the bowser. The tax will initially add 2.5 cents per litre of LPG, but will increase incrementally over five years until it reaches 12.5 cents per litre on 1 July 2015.



SensaSlim sues consumer champ

Public health advocate and CHOICE health policy representative Dr Ken Harvey faces court proceedings after lodging a complaint about fraudulent advertising claims with the TGA's advertising Complaints Resolution Panel (CRP). The complaint is about SensaSlim Solution, a weight loss oral spray that claims to suppress the appetite. The company, linked with disgraced entrepreneur Peter

could be in the courts for a year or two or even longer, basically gives an iron clad protection that nobody can raise a complaint against SensaSlim to the CRP and hurt us".

While the CRP's hands seem tied by their own regulations over Dr Harvey's complaint, they'd earlier adjudicated on a similar complaint, determining that SensaSlim had to withdraw representations that the product has

benefits in relation to appetite suppression, effects upon the taste buds or taste sensitivity, weight management or weight loss, or that it is effective or clinically proven to have such benefits. However, the determination was withdrawn at SensaSlim's request, claiming they hadn't been given enough opportunity to respond to the complaint.

Since the ACCC has commenced proceedings against SensaSlim, it has frozen the company's assets pending its own investigations into misleading and deceptive conduct, and the company

has been placed into administration. As we go to press, the court has also banned SensaSlim from making any efficacy claims based on clinical trials that haven't been published in a peer-reviewed journal.

CHOICE feels there is good cause for the TGA to remove SensaSlim from the Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods, making its promotion and sale illegal, and has written to the administration to that effect. And given the ease with which the proceedings such as those started by SensaSlim can be issued and their effect in suppressing action against fraudulent and misleading advertising, we also believe that regulation 42ZCAJ should be repealed.

KARINA BRAY



Powered pruning

The Bosch Ciso cordless secateurs claim to make pruning effortless, with powered blades that make one cut per second, and 500 cuts or more from a single charge of the integrated lithium-ion battery (depending on thickness of the branches).

We had seven home gardeners test their cutting performance on hardwood and softwood and rate balance, manoeuvrability and comfort. Generally, they made perfectly clean cuts on softwood and acceptable to perfectly clean results on hardwood. Comfort and balance were acceptable, though a couple of people found them tricky to manoeuvre. The reach to the trigger was a bit too far for those with small hands and the cutting action was slower than expected. At 590g, they're heavier than conventional secateurs.

These secateurs may be marketed to people with weak hands, so we had two arthritis sufferers assess them. Both found them too heavy to hold or operate.

CHOICE VERDICT

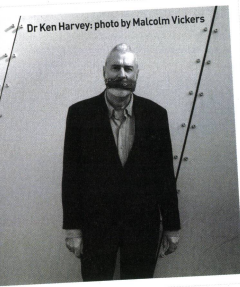
The Bosch Ciso cordless secateurs produce a great cut on roses. But you can buy a good-quality conventional pair for less.

CHRIS BARNES

BOSCH CISO CORDLESS SECATEURS

Price \$99

Contact www.bosch-pt.com.au



Dr Ken Harvey: photo by Malcolm Vickers

Foster, is attempting to sue Dr Harvey for defamation to the tune of \$800,000 plus costs.

Win or lose, initiating proceedings has meant a key advantage for SensaSlim. Under regulation 42ZCAJ of the *Therapeutic Goods Regulations*, the CRP can't deal with a complaint if the subject of the complaint is involved in legal proceedings. So, Dr Harvey's complaint – and others about the product – has been put aside, awaiting resolution in the courts. Meanwhile, SensaSlim is still available for purchase.

While SensaSlim denies the purpose of the proceedings is to delay CRP action, management pointed out in an internal newsletter CHOICE has seen that "this defamation action, which



Should you be worried about Greece?

Concerns over Greek debt levels and the potential domino effect should the country default on its debts have spooked investors and given rise to fears of a second global financial crisis.

The International Monetary Fund issued a warning in June after consulting with Greece and other struggling nations, stating that "failure to undertake decisive action could rapidly spread the tensions to the core of the euro [currency] area and result in large global spill-overs".

The Reserve Bank and Treasurer Wayne Swan were quick to reassure Australian investors our financial system is well positioned to face liquidity concerns in the event of a new credit crunch, but stopped short of declaring complete immunity. But if you have superannuation coming to maturity in the short to mid-term it's worth seeking financial advice to ensure you have appropriate investments for the current climate. **BRENDAN MAYS**

Fatter than fat?

New research suggests the synthetic fat olestra, which tastes and feels like fat but passes

through the body undigested, letting dieters eat "fatty" foods without absorbing kilojoules, might actually make you gain weight.

Olestra isn't available in Australia but has been approved as a food additive in the US since 1996. US researchers found that rats fed Pringles Light (made with olestra) ate more and became fatter than those given regular Pringles. This effect has only so far been shown in rats, but an association between artificial sweeteners and

Forest friendly

The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) have launched the Love Your Forests (LYF) campaign to promote global forest sustainability. The campaign, which coincides with the UN Year of Forests, will include certification of forest-friendly paper and timber products with the LYF logo. The FSC certifies materials sourced from well-managed forests, and not from illegal logging.

Last year CHOICE found few toilet papers on the market were eco-label certified (see *CHOICE*, June 2010). Now Kleenex Cottonelle will bear the WWF and FSC logos. The FSC logo also appears on timber products in Bunnings, which has taken a zero tolerance approach to illegal timber.

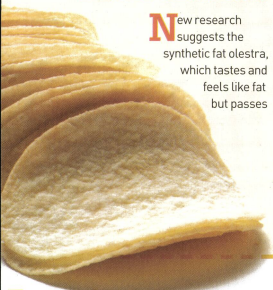
ZOYA SHEFTALOVICH



becoming overweight has been demonstrated in humans.

Our bodies seem to learn from sensory clues such as the taste of sugar that a kilojoule hit is on its way, stimulating the body to prepare for digestion. When these cues are not always followed by energy-dense food the body gets confused. The next time it encounters real sweet or fatty food it may not be able to use the energy efficiently, leading to weight gain.

JANE BARDELL



Member spotlight

We chat to Kenneth Elias from Sydney, NSW, who has been a member for three years.

Why did you decide to join CHOICE?

I decided to join to have access to extensive product and service information so I could make better-informed buying decisions.

What's the best purchase you have made using a CHOICE recommendation?

My Epson TX810FW multifunction printer.

You and your wife are expecting your first child.

Will you consult our online babies and kids section to get the nursery ready?

Absolutely, it is great to have a source that has already done the research.

Is there anything you'd like to see CHOICE test or investigate in the near future?

It would be great if CHOICE could investigate cars, in particular SUVs.

Where is your favourite holiday destination?

It would have to be South Beach, Miami in the US.

If you would like to be our next Member Spotlight, please email your details to inthespotlight@choice.com.au



Lupin flour good for heart

Australian researchers have found flour made with the legume lupin can reduce the risk of heart disease.

The 12-month study compared the body weight, composition and cardiovascular disease risk factors of 131 overweight trialists, who ate either foods made from flour that contained 40% lupin beans, or regular wholemeal flour. There was no difference in weight loss between the groups, but trialists who ate lupin-enriched foods showed greater improvements in insulin sensitivity and blood pressure.

HANNAH GREW



Sort your super

Australians are missing out on an estimated \$18.8 billion dollars of lost super.

An estimated 1.3 million new superannuation accounts are created each year, and unless the effort to rollover funds to a new account

is made, more super could be lost.

Having multiple super accounts presents additional problems. For each superannuation account, consumers will have to pay additional fees and may miss returns. This cost measures into the billions, and can adversely affect your retirement savings.

So, this year, while you are sorting out your tax return, spend some time organising your super as well. If you want to check for any lost super available under your name, visit ato.gov.au and search for SuperSeeker.

BRENDAN MAYS

\$18.8b

The amount of lost super in Australia, June 2010

Source: ATO

Hair-straightening hazard?

There has been a spate of recalls issued in the past year for hair-straightening products found to have unsafe levels of free formaldehyde, and the ACCC is urging hair salons to check whether the straightening and treatment products they use are safe. Formaldehyde can cause skin sensitisation, sensory irritation and even cancer in some cases of high chronic exposure. In one case, where hairdressers were complaining of nose bleeds, eye irritation and breathing problems, the level of formaldehyde was found to be 12% – much higher than the permitted maximum of 0.2%. For more information on the recalls, visit recalls.gov.au and go to the beauty and health recall category. KARINA BRAY

The right medicine

A federal senate inquiry into the process of listing medicines on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) has been welcomed by consumers opposed to recent government intervention in the PBS approval process.

In April, Cabinet deferred its decision on several pharmaceutical products recommended for inclusion in the PBS by the government's Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC) at its February meeting. The drugs were deemed to be cost effective and offer value for money. It's been claimed the deferral is a cost-cutting measure.

The deferred drugs, which include treatments for schizophrenia, chronic pain, lung disease and enlarged prostate, may be funded later. But pharmaceutical companies say

patients' health could be at risk due to the delay. The expertise and experience cabinet ministers have at their disposal to override decisions of their own expert committee has also been called into question.

Carol Bennett, CEO of the Consumer Health Forum, supports the inquiry. "In a developed country such as Australia, the provision of affordable, timely and effective medicines is a right that should not become a political bargaining chip or a short-term measure for returning the federal budget to surplus," she says.

Health economists have further suggested that a revision of the current generic drug pricing agreement would easily accommodate the cost of introducing these and other cutting-edge medications. The NZ government, for example, pays \$1.44 for a one-month supply of cholesterol-lowering drug simvastatin. The world average is \$6.45; our government is paying \$31.18.

Paying international prices and switching to 100% generic statins could save almost \$10 billion over 10 years. Introducing a NZ-style tendering system for all off-patent drugs could produce even greater savings.

KARINA BRAY



I say

A few Tuesdays ago my partner and I had an expensive degustation dinner at a formerly favourite restaurant. After asking for the bill and twiddling our thumbs while those around us received theirs, we decided to just head up to the counter and settle there.

We politely asked for the bill, but a grumbled "sit back down!" was barked in our direction. We asked again, explaining we were in a rush, and once again, like misbehaving school children, were told to get back to our seats. When we insisted on paying at the counter, the mumbled expletives that were thrown at us were ridiculous and totally uncalled for.

Needless to say, the night ended on a sour note.

Here at CHOICE we often receive first-hand reports of good and bad customer service from members. Overwhelmingly we hear that the way in which a company values its clients is as important, if not more so, as the quality of the product or service they're selling. The problem is that

businesses sometimes don't know when their clients have a terrible experience as many people can't or won't complain.

A few days after my awful experience, I emailed the restaurant to let them know why I would no longer be dining there. I received a sympathetic response and the offer of

"Businesses sometimes don't know when their clients have had a terrible experience as many people can't or won't complain"

dinner on the house. I didn't accept this on principle just to make absolutely sure that the message was received loud and clear.

Plus, I'd hate to think that the freebie was motivated by the fact that several years ago I spent a delicious (and regrettably fattening) year working as a restaurant reviewer!

ZOYA SHEFTALOVICH



An inkling of danger

Harmful mineral oils from printing inks can leach into foods packaged or transported in recycled cardboard even if the food inside is sealed in plastic, research has found.

In tests on packs of noodles, researchers in Switzerland found food readily absorbed up to 10 times the recommended limit of mineral oils from the transport box. The international limit for mineral oil contamination is 0.6mg/kg of food.



After just six weeks, the noodles contained 6.1mg/kg of mineral oils – levels that could increase over time as they have a two-year shelf life.

"There is a tension between the need to recycle paper and board and the need to keep food free from high levels of mineral oils," says Dr Koni Grob, the research team head.

While some companies have switched to materials and inks free from mineral oils, others haven't. There's no way that consumers can know whether food has been transported in recycled cardboard or come into contact with mineral oils.

As the studies were European-based, it's difficult to know how the situation in Australia compares.

EMILY MCCLUSKEY



Need for speed

New payment methods allowing you to use your credit or debit card without providing a PIN or signature continue to be controversial with consumers. CHOICE members have expressed concern at not being able to opt out of the programs, as well as the lack of information provided by banks and card issuers.

At this stage, there are two new payment methods in place for small-value transactions, including the near-field methods (Visa payWave and MasterCard PayPass) and the new Fast Pay service, which is available at select retailers such as Coles and McDonald's. The number of retailers offering this service is set to increase. CHOICE is concerned that consumers are not being given the option to opt out. One alternative is to switch to an EFTPOS-only card, as the PIN-free schemes are currently only available to Visa, MasterCard or Amex users.

Despite concerns, the new system does feature security protections. Each card provider has extensive fraud protection, and if your card is stolen, you're guaranteed against any liability as long as you let your bank know as soon as you realise it's missing. The nature of the transactions is also less likely to attract the type of fraud that normally occurs, such as from using your credit card on an unsafe website.

BRENDAN MAYS

End of millionaires' factories?

Shareholders will now be able to force a board spill over executive remuneration packages. Under the new two-strikes rule, passed by the Senate in June and commenced in July, if 25% of shareholders vote no on a company's remuneration report at two consecutive annual general meetings, shareholders will have the opportunity to spill the board.

The changes will also prohibit directors from hedging their remuneration or voting on the remuneration of key management personnel, and boards will have to declare the use of remuneration consultants. The move comes as a result of a Productivity Commission inquiry into executive remuneration in 2009. **ZOYA SHEFTALOVICH**

Lab tours filling fast

All members are invited to participate in CHOICE's famous lab tours, which will be held from 10.30am–1pm on Wednesday 21 September, Wednesday 12 October and Thursday 17 November. Watch

how the magic happens, meet our specialists, chat with Nick Stace or Christopher Zinn and have a spot of morning tea. Please register attendance by emailing member@choice.com.au.



CHOICE investigates



The Tower 200 Home Gym consists of a frame that attaches to a door, with a set of elastic cables allowing a range of arm, leg and body workouts. CHOICE member Denise Turner recently told us about a painful incident with hers. One of the straps broke very soon after buying the product, and later, while her son was working out using the Tower 200, another cable snapped and hit him, leaving a red weal on his back. We also found a couple of mentions of similar breakages in online reviews and forums.

We put the Tower 200 to a series of strength tests by loading the cables and handles to 120% of their

claimed strain. None of them broke, although wear and tear after many workouts may increase the chance of a breakage. While our testing didn't find any problems, if you're interested in using the Tower 200 we suggest you check the cables, handles and pulleys for any obvious wear and tear before each session.

The Tower 200 Home Gym warranty claims to cover only the steel frame, and not the power cords, handles or other parts. However, for its usual price of \$200, you should be able to expect sturdy and long-lasting components. So if any part fails within a reasonable period of use – say, one year – consumer guarantees would apply.

If you'd like CHOICE to investigate a product safety issue, email us at tippoffs@choice.com.au

CHRIS BARNES



Smarter day care

Formal childcare is better for children's cognitive development than leaving them with family members or friends, according to a study of single mothers and their childcare choices.

The study of American mothers using the National Longitudinal Surveys found children who attended formal day care or preschool programs had the same standardised test scores as those who stayed home with mum. Conversely, each year spent in the care of family or friends resulted in a reduction in test scores by 2.6%. "This research suggests that separation from the mother has a negative effect on a child's cognitive ability, but this can be offset by the appropriate choice of day care," says researcher Raquel Bernal.

EMILY MCCLUSKEY



\$11

Potential cost of a
"free" 10-minute
roadside assistance
call from a mobile

Time for "free call" reform

The Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN) is asking Telstra, Optus and Vodafone to turn off the timer when customers dial "free" or fixed-price 13- and 1800- numbers from mobiles.

ACCAN's research reveals that calling 13- and 1800- numbers from mobiles can cost up to \$1.78 a minute – and the charges are often incurred in unavoidable situations. A 10-minute call for roadside assistance can cost up to \$11

and a 30-minute call to a 1800- number to report a stolen credit card up to \$27, ACCAN says. Phoning these numbers from a landline is either free or costs a flat fee of about 30c.

Free call legislation, passed in 1997, hasn't kept up with the mobile phone revolution. "In 2011, there are more mobiles than people in Australia and the numbering system hasn't kept pace with the way we're communicating," says ACCAN spokeswoman Elise Davidson.

ANDY KOLLMORGEN



Fab frying or hot air?

The Philips Viva Collection Airfryer fries food using a combination of circulating hot air and a grill element. It also uses minimal oil, promoting itself as a healthy alternative to traditional deep frying. As well as claiming to cook the "best tasting fries without the oil", you can use the Airfryer for meat and poultry dishes such as schnitzel and drumsticks, as well as snacks such as spring rolls, nuggets and fish fingers.

Our home economist, Fiona Mair, tested the Airfryer by cooking chips, chicken legs, crumbed chicken tenderloins and chicken balls. The chicken was juicy and tender with a nice golden colour, but the chips weren't as evenly browned and were crisp in some areas but soft in others. Fiona did find, however, that while most recipes still require some oil, it's a minuscule amount compared with deep fryers.

The Airfryer is easy to use – the cooking basket has a handle that's easy to slide out and lift. It has a large dial timer and graded temperature control, but the labelling is quite small. Its plastic exterior is easy to wipe over and the non-stick pan is a breeze to

clean. The pan separator and stainless steel mesh basket is also dishwasher-safe. On the downside, it's large, bulky and has a small cooking area that only accommodates about four serves of one food item. It has a pan separator to cook multiple items at once, but chances are you'll still need to cook in batches. Not only will this add to your preparation time, you may still need to use your oven to keep the first batch warm. We also calculated its running costs to be \$347 based on three hours use per week over 10 years – that's more than some ovens we've tested.

CHOICE VERDICT

While the Airfryer is a healthier alternative to deep frying, it's bulky and is expensive to buy and run. If you keep the oil to a minimum, you can get the same results with your oven.

REBECCA GATTO

PHILIPS VIVA COLLECTION AIRFRYER HD9220/40

Price \$329

Contact www.philips.com.au



Whoops!

In *CHOICE*, June 2010, we failed to mention that HBF offers a discount for direct debits and paying in advance

in the table on page 19. We also wrongly listed HCF as having no ambulance cover in the table on page 20.



➤ FIRST PERSON

Open road

Comic, author and broadcaster Terri Psiakis discovers the occasional joys of roadside assistance.

It was a dark and stormy night (no, really, it's Melbourne). After a long day's writing at my local library I ran through sleet to reach my car, and after collapsing into the driver's seat, I turned the ignition. Nothing. I turned it again. Nothing. Of all the nights...

I called the RACV and hunched down in my seat, sullenly settling in for what the phone operator said would be a 40-minute wait. Ten minutes later the familiar yellow van turned up. In disbelief, I checked my watch: had I been abducted by aliens and lost time? "G'day!" said the RACV man brightly. "Looks like you've done your battery! I'll call a battery van, they'll be here within the hour!"

Sure enough, 15 minutes later another yellow van turned up. "Stay in your car, it's too cold to get out!" said the even-brighter battery man, and in barely 15 minutes, he was done and I was home.

I've used the RACV before but, well... I never knew it could be like this. And why would I ever learn how to do car stuff myself when I could get an awesome RACV guy to do it? I went from feeling glad my toddler wasn't there to wishing she was – I've no doubt those guys could have fixed her refusal to eat vegetables.

Your Say

We want to hear from you. If your experience is not good, then you can help other CHOICE members avoid scams and rip-offs. If you've had a great response to a complaint you've taken to a manufacturer or retailer, our members want to know about that too! Email us at yoursay@choice.com.au or write to Your Say, CHOICE, 57 Carrington Road, Marrickville, NSW 2204. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

Image conscious

Having worked in the field for more than 16 years, I read your recent article on medical imaging (CHOICE, June 2011) with some interest. Thank you for acknowledging a great frustration within the sector that Medicare rebates have dropped against the costs of providing the service.

However, I think care must be taken when intertwining the definition of patient and consumer. When a GP refers someone for a specific examination at a specific company, it's based on a thorough clinical assessment of the patient and years of knowledge about a certain provider. The patient is not the most informed person to make a decision on what procedure is best for them and by whom.

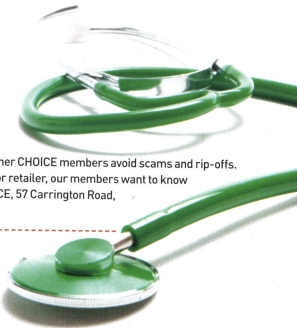
I also question your advice for the patient to ring around to get the best price. Gap payments don't just allow for "easy parking and no waiting" – there is a vast variation in

the quality of medical imaging equipment. Some companies insist on using only the most advanced equipment and strongly support staff's continuing education. For the benefit of their hospital patients they may need to be available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. These companies have to charge a larger gap to cover such costs. The referrer would be aware of these variations and would determine whether they felt the gap payment is valid for the quality of the procedure being requested.

My advice to patients is to discuss the procedure with their referrer, along with the preferred provider. Ultimately this is the person they should trust with all matters regarding their health.

Tricia Duggin, Perth, WA

CHOICE SAYS We agree doctors should pass on to patients their opinion about the quality of clinical services of imaging



providers. But from a consumer perspective there is often a problem with referrals in that many doctors do indeed have a long-term relationship with a certain provider, effectively excluding alternative providers from consideration (particularly public hospital shop-front services) who may offer services of the highest quality without a gap payment.

Consumers may need to be proactive to be confident they're getting quality service, the level of convenience they prefer, and a gap fee that best matches their budget. If a quality public provider is not geared up for minimal waiting or reasonable parking, consumers may elect to pay a gap for a more convenient private service in their local area.

LETTER OF THE MONTH

Bodgy bathroom reno

In August 2008 I contacted a bathroom renovation company, Bathroom Werx, for a quote. The price seemed reasonable and the job was to take two to three days.

Three years later, the job is still incomplete. I've had the company out at least five times to do "band-aid" repairs, including ripping up tiles, re-enamelling and repairing enamel that was peeling off. There are multiple low spots in the shower recess grout, which is a concern for mould, as water builds up.

In January 2011, I had NSW Fair Trading

out for site mediation, and Bathroom Werx have now done more bodgy repairs on top of old work. I requested a full refund as I do not want them back to ruin my bathroom any more. The area manager offered me 10% refund after inspecting the bathroom. This is far from satisfactory.

Jennifer McGuinness, Revesby, NSW

CHOICE SAYS Always get several quotes for any planned renovation work. Also check the trader is licensed: bla.net.au



provides links to the licensing bodies, but also check with the consumer affairs office in your state.

If the work performed is not up to standard, and this cannot be resolved with the trader, the first point of call should be your state's consumer body. In Jennifer's case, the next step may be to go to the Consumer, Trader and Tenancy Tribunal (CTTT) – www.cttt.nsw.gov.au.



PLEASE CUT HERE

Still chasing down daily deal

My husband and I have purchased a number of services from group buying websites, particularly Scoopon, and have been disappointed with the outcomes. Last year I bought a voucher for carpet cleaning from The Carpet Cleaning Company through Scoopon and am still trying to tie them down for an appointment. I managed to get one for May, only to be told a day before that all their vans were off the road and they would call to reschedule. This never happened. I called back a few weeks later and was told they'd ring me with the new revised schedule, but I never heard from them.

Who is liable here when the services are not delivered? Scoopon has my money already but don't appear to claim liability. Who is accountable for delivering the service we've paid for?

Gina Levy, Kingsford, NSW

CHOICE SAYS Some daily deal websites have better buyer protection than others. Cudo, Spreets and JumpOnIt generally have better refund policies for situations such as this one, and have been calling for an industry code of conduct.

In this case, you could consider letting the daily deal website know that you'll be asking your bank to perform a chargeback unless they are able to provide you with a refund or the service as it was advertised. If they can't resolve your problem, call your bank and get them to perform a chargeback. The bank will have to investigate, but you should get your money back.

Update: Gina told CHOICE that Scoopon finally contacted her, seven months after her initial purchase, to refund her money following the closure of the third-party service provider.

Thumbs



Jill Gerrard, of Woodlands, WA, purchased a Swatch watch while overseas last year. When the band broke, she emailed Swatch Australia to ask if the band would be covered by warranty, without saying where she'd purchased the watch or providing a receipt or warranty papers. She received an email the next day saying a replacement band was on its way. It arrived two days later, and Swatch also sent a tool to help fit the band to the watch.



Ian McNaught's (of Castle Hill, NSW) experience with Tempo Australia contrasts with that of Bob Hatcher (see Your Say, CHOICE, May 2011). He sent his TV to them for warranty work in February this year. When he enquired more than a month later about the progress, he was told the set may have been lost. On three occasions he was promised a replacement set that never arrived. Finally, he asked for a refund. After having to follow this up with the customer service department twice, Ian finally received a cheque in May.



Carol Fallows of North Sydney, NSW, bought a new Neff oven in 2006. Within a year of the four-year warranty expiring, the light bulb could not be changed without removing the oven from the wall, the oven sill was rusty and then the grill fan failed. Sampford IXL, Neff's Australian distributor, insisted the sill was merely dirty, not rusty, until she sent photos and advised that she had had it checked by a repairman, the installer and a metallurgist! After many phone calls and emails, Sampford IXL agreed to replace the sill free of charge, but would not pay for the labour. Carol has taken the matter to the CTTT.

Clearing the air

Having read the rangehood test in your June issue, I'm surprised the air movement isn't listed. A rangehood is supposed to remove the smells, grease, fumes, carbon monoxide from the burnt gas etc, so we want something that's powerful enough to do the job well.

Where the noise is measured, I'd suggest it should also be noted relative to the volume of air displaced. A salesperson once tried to convince us the louder a rangehood is, the better it's working. Of course, that isn't always the case due to the differences in motors, how they are mounted, and the structure/design of the rangehood itself along with the ducting method.

Andrew Hooper, Parkdale, Vic

necessarily reflective of a rangehood's performance. Generally, internal design is a better indicator, which is reflected in performance scores. However, we'll consider listing a rangehood's claimed air movement in future tests for interested members.

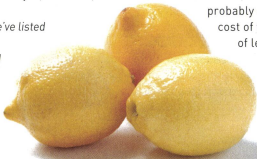
Lost lemonade

We recently discovered a perfectly sealed yet completely empty can in a 24-pack of Schweppes lemonade. After sending them an email, Schweppes replied promptly, apologising for what had happened and requesting my mailing address so that they could reimburse us. We soon received a WISH Gift

Card for \$5 - which is probably double the cost of the can of lemonade!

Lauren Woolerton, Morphet Vale, SA

CHOICE SAYS We've listed air movement in our rangehood tests in the past, but have found it isn't





Following the money trail

Taking the bias out of financial advice has been a labour of love for CHOICE. **Andy Kollmorgen** takes a look at where we've been and where we're headed.

NUTSHELL

- The government's Future of Financial Advice reforms have been clarified – but we still don't believe they go far enough.
- CHOICE weighs in on what we'd like to see the new "best interest duty" deliver and why it's long overdue.

CHOICE has been calling for an overhaul of the financial services industry for more than 20 years. As we reported last year (see CHOICE, July 2010, page 34, or choice.com.au/financialadvice), the federal government, through its Future of Financial Advice (FOFA) reforms, hopes that changing the way advisers are allowed to earn money and introducing a statutory fiduciary duty will

resolve any conflicts between the interests of an adviser and that of their client. But these are not the only positive changes that we'll be seeing – see More Wins for Consumers, opposite.

We're watching carefully to ensure these reforms are planned properly, so that when they're implemented from July next year, consumers can benefit from transparent and fair payment arrangements that don't compromise the quality of advice.

In English, please!

Financial advisers like to use terms such as "white label payments", "cross-subsidisation", "vertical integration" and "volume payments". You likely won't know what they're talking about unless you're an adviser yourself. It's even harder to know whether the financial products they recommend are good for you or good for them.

What they're talking about is how they get paid. In the case of volume payments, advisers are encouraged to sell as many financial products to as many people as possible, regardless of whether the product is suitable for the client. They get a cut from the originator of the product or investment scheme (usually an insurance company, bank or fund manager) based on the total volume of sales. It's not unlike how salespeople receive commissions to sell cars, except what's on offer can have a permanent impact on your financial wellbeing. CHOICE chair Jenni Mack, who also chairs the Australian Securities and Investments Commission's (ASIC) Consumer Advisory Panel, calls volume payments "the most odious of commissions because they are very large, very secret and almost impossible to disclose".

Conflicted financial advice has damaged consumers in many ways and the victims

18,200

number of people
in Australia
calling themselves
financial advisers

41,556

number of people
authorised to give
financial advice

85%

advisers financially
linked to a bank,
insurance company
or fund manager

have rarely recouped more than cents on the dollar, if anything at all. In recent corporate collapses such as Westpoint Corporation, some advisers persuaded consumers to lend money to property developers without warning that the investments were highly speculative and the developers were, in effect, gambling with their money. Others talked clients into complex and high-risk structured investments that offered no way out when the global downturn began to spread. Worst of all, some investors were advised to take out margin loans, sell shares or investment properties and even borrow against their homes. As markets were pushed downward and the margin calls came in, many lost their homes along with the initial investments.

Thankfully, the way advisers make their money is set to change – and it can't come soon enough.

Filmsy protection

The Parliamentary Joint Committee on Corporations and Financial Services appointed late last year interprets the so-called "suitability rule" in the Corporations Act as saying an adviser "must know their client, know the product and/or strategy they are recommending, and ensure that the product and/or strategy is appropriate to the clients' particular needs".

Yet according to the committee, ASIC, which enforces the act, admits the legislation "does not include ASIC vetting licensees"

business models or preventing the availability of complex or high risk financial products to unsophisticated investors". ASIC also acknowledges the regulation of financial services providers "has been designed to maximise market efficiency, with minimal regulatory intervention to protect investors".

Trust issues

Currently, ASIC does not address the risk to consumers arising from the financial relationships between advisers and the companies whose products they sell – a relationship that potentially biases the advice given by more than 80% of advisers. It's no surprise, then, that a key goal of the FOFA

MORE WINS FOR CONSUMERS

Ending conflicts of interests in the form of commissions and other secret payments is critical to making the reforms work, but CHOICE has also pushed for other important changes, set to take effect from July 2012.

- ✓ **An end to commissions and volume payments** from product-makers to advisers.
- ✓ **A ban on commissions from advice about life insurance** sold inside superannuation accounts (but unfortunately not for life insurance in general) from July 2013.
- ✓ **A partial ban on asset fees** to specifically target the business model behind the Storm Financial debacle. Asset fees bias advice towards an asset from which a fee can be deducted. A recent study found consumers who pay asset-based fees pay 17 times more over the long term than those who pay hourly rates or lump sums.
- ✓ **Opt-in** Advisers who charge ongoing fees will need to obtain a client's permission every two years to continue the advice relationship. This will put an end to passive income received by advisers and cases in which they draw fees off accounts with little or no transparency for the client. Opting in means only those who want and approve ongoing advice will pay for it.
- ✓ An advisory panel has been established to look into **new professional and ethics standards and education and training rules** for advisers.
- ✓ **Last resort compensation scheme** It's been proposed that fund managers be required to retain enough accessible capital to compensate consumers if their money is lost through poor management or conflicted financial advice.

reforms is for advisers to put a client's interests first in cases where the adviser might benefit from recommending a financial product that is not in the best interest of the client (see Whose Best Interest? on page 18).

The industry's take

Mark Rantall, CEO of the Financial Planning Association (FPA), maintains most advisers are already acting in the clients' best interest. "The integrated model [in which advisers recommend products from the companies that pay them] doesn't mean you're getting bad advice," he told CHOICE. "If you're seeing an adviser who's working for or representing ▶

a certain financial institution, you know they're going to recommend its products. But the adviser is legally bound to determine whether the product is right for you and send you elsewhere if it isn't."

However, shadow shopping by both CHOICE and ASIC has found that advice received through the integrated model is unlikely to be in the best interest of the client. Rantall also points out that advisers are often unfairly blamed for the failure of products they did not create. "Large-scale collapses may not have been in control of the adviser. The licensee [product creator] has to be held to the same standards. We need joint accountability." ■



Whose best interest?

CHOICE believes the government's "best interest" proposals don't go far enough.

What the government proposes:

BEST INTEREST DUTY, VERSION 1

"To act in the best interests of the client and, if there is a conflict between the client's interest and the interest of the person providing personal advice or the providing entity, to give priority to the client's interest."

VERSION 2 "To have proper regard to, and act in accordance with, the interest of the client and place the interests of the client above their own interests and the interest of the providing entity."

The two versions may sound remarkably similar, but Financial Services Council (FSC) chief John Brogden has explained that version one is "outcomes-based" while version two is "process-based". He argues that in the first version, determining the best interests of the client is subjective, while the second version offers protection for both the client and the adviser.

The FSC and FPA prefer version two, which doesn't specifically mention conflict of interest.

What CHOICE wants:

- Consumers should not be left to trust the adviser's judgment on whether a conflict of interest exists. Advisers should have a specific duty to demonstrate whether a conflict does or doesn't exist and identify how they will put the client's interests first when it does.
- Advisers should have an overarching duty to ensure the entire scope of the advice – not just individual recommendations – is in the client's best interest.
- The providing entity (that is, the product-maker or fund manager that holds the financial services licence) should have a separate duty to ensure that personal advice provided by authorised representatives is in the client's best interests and that those interests come before those of the provider.

Finding the right adviser

- **Getting a reference from a trusted friend** is generally the best way to find a trustworthy financial planner. Ask them specifically what their adviser has done for them and how they've come out ahead by hiring one.
- **Professional associations also offer useful services for finding an adviser.** Three worth looking into are the FPA's goodadvice.com.au, CPA Australia's website.cpaaustralia.com.au and the Association of Financial Advisers (afa.asn.au).
- **Contact the firm for more information** once you find some good prospects (if they tell you you'll have pay a visit to

find out, keep looking). The first question to ask is whether the adviser is employed by or authorised to represent a business that holds an Australian Financial Services (AFS) licence. To verify, visit ASIC's website (asic.gov.au) and check the AFS Licence Register, AFS Authorised Representatives Register, Banned and Disqualified Persons Register, and National Names Index (to find out about the company).

- **Is the adviser independent?** For this to be the case, they must offer a fee-for-service rather than a commissions-based payment system. We recommend fee-for-service, unless all commissions are fully refunded to the consumer. Make sure this is made clear.

- **Does the licence cover the services you need?** You may be looking for advice on superannuation, insurance, shares, managed funds or banking products – does the adviser specialise in one area? If yes, ask for evidence of past successful advice in that area using specific examples.
- **Who's the parent company?** Almost all advisory firms are linked to a bank, insurance company or fund manager and may only be allowed to offer products from those companies – or have a strong financial incentive to prefer them even if they're free to offer other products. This doesn't necessarily mean you'll get bad advice, but you need to be aware of the conflict.



Carbon price and you

In light of the fallout over the government's carbon price announcement, **Matt Levey** looks at what's next.

CHOICE believes the carbon price should pressure manufacturers to reduce their carbon emissions at a minimal cost to consumers

For all the political argy bargy going on, it's easy to lose sight of the consensus on climate change policy in Australia.

Both major parties agree the prospect of dangerous climate change requires action, and are committed to reducing Australia's carbon emissions by 5% or more below 2000 levels by 2020.

Currently, carbon emissions aren't accounted for as part of the economy. The carbon price changes this – which also means changes at the checkout. On 13 July, the government announced extra resources for the ACCC to target businesses attempting to pass on unrelated costs under the guise of the carbon price. This will help deter unscrupulous operators from encouraging consumers to get in quick to avoid price rises that may be inflated or unrelated.

Extra resources are a good start, but if the introduction of the GST 11 years ago is any indication, the ACCC will have its hands full. Back then there were more than 50,000 complaints, leading to 7000 investigations and court proceedings in 11 matters. This time around, we have the benefit of hindsight, plus much stronger consumer laws.

As the people's watchdog, CHOICE will also be on the alert, ready to name, shame and report carbon offenders. We believe the carbon price should pressure manufacturers to reduce their carbon emissions at a minimal cost to consumers.

We're on the lookout for carbon con artists, so if you see any signs of shonky green deals or inflated carbon prices, email us at tipoffs@choice.com.au.

Who pays the carbon tax?

The carbon price will apply directly to about 500 of the largest carbon emitters in Australia. Most are heavy industry, and together they represent about 60% of Australia's annual carbon emissions.

The catch for consumers is that businesses will inevitably pass on to us some of the carbon costs of many goods and services we use every day, from power to food and groceries. But they'll also look for opportunities to reduce their carbon liability and stay competitive. That's the point of the carbon price – using market competition to drive change.

Will the cost increase?

The initial carbon price will be set at \$23 per tonne from 1 July 2012. According to the government, the impact on prices is estimated at \$9.90 on average weekly expenditures in 2012-13, including \$3.30 per week on electricity, \$1.50 on gas and 80c on food. This is balanced against average household assistance of \$10.10 per week. The price will increase by 2.5% per cent a year until 2015, when it will become flexible. After 1 July 2015, the price will be determined by Australia's target for

reduction of carbon emissions (which will increase over time) and the cost of emissions reductions available in Australia and overseas.

Who gets compensation?

The government is directing more than 50% of the revenue raised by the scheme back to households in the form of compensation. This will be distributed as tax cuts and increases in pensions, benefits and allowances, depending on whether you are a worker, part of a family with children, a pensioner or self-funded retiree or welfare recipient. The assistance will rise over time based on CPI, which will reflect increases in the carbon price. Full details of the government's compensation package are at www.cleanenergyfuture.gov.au.





Reel rip-off

Is it still possible to go to the movies without suffering a financial coronary? **Zoya Sheftalovich** finds out.

Date night, girls' night out, rainy-day antidote – name the occasion, and a trip to the movies sounds like the perfect way to celebrate it. In fact, cinema attendance is the most popular cultural pastime in Australia, with 67% of us going to the movies at least once last year. But the cost of a cinema trip has steadily increased; profits have been bumped up through pricey extras, and many cheaper independents are shutting up shop.

Want to catch a flick? It'll have to be in 3D, because two dimensions just won't do anymore. Neither will that traditional screen – you'll need to see it on Vmax or Xtremescreen to get the full effect. And don't forget that barrel of popcorn and a bucket of soft drink. That'll be how much?

Excuse me!

Seeing a 3D movie on a Vmax screen at Event Cinemas in Innaloo, WA, will set an

adult back \$24 and a child \$19.50. Splitting a large popcorn and soft drink will add another \$13.50 to the bill. For a family of four, you won't see change from \$100. Be prepared for even more hip-pocket pain if you forget to bring your own 3D glasses.

WA consumers are not alone. Event Cinemas Bondi Junction in NSW charges the same, while movie-goers in Marion, SA and Brisbane, Qld pay only a fraction less. Hoyts charges similar prices. So it's not surprising that when CHOICE asked our members whether they still thought of the movies as a cheap thrill, the response was a resounding no. "I don't take the kids anymore – last time I did it cost me \$90!" says Sue Brooks (see Do the Maths, opposite).

Leah Anderson agrees. "With prices the way they are and four kids, it's a special occasion. We can't do it often, maybe twice a year."

But with some forward planning and a willingness to forego the add-ons, there are ways to reduce your cinema costs.

Timing is everything

Going to the movies may not blow the budget if you attend during off-peak times. Most cinemas offer discounts on particular days of the week – usually Mondays or Tuesdays – when adult tickets can cost as little as \$6.50. Event Cinemas also have \$8 Mondays for students, and some Hoyts screen selected "Matinee Movies" before 5pm for between \$9 and \$15.

But as with most special deals, always read the terms and conditions. Some cinemas charge extra for premium screens and 3D, while some others don't discount these sessions at all.

Break the chains

They may not have the huge screens or the variety, but the local independent can be a cheaper way to take your family to the movies. There are savings to be had at Brisbane's Cineplex chain (up to \$8.50 for adults, \$4.50 child), Sydney's Dumaresq Street Cinema (all tickets \$6), Adelaide's Odeon Star Semaphore Cinemas (\$8 all tickets) and Melbourne's Australian Cinemas Croydon (up to \$11.50 adult, \$7.50 child for 2D), among others.

CHOICE readers reported their satisfaction with several local cheapies. "I almost always go to a small community cinema now," says Peter Christie. "It's old and dusty and plays only a selection of latest releases. However, tickets are just \$8 for any session. I still think the cinema is a thrill and have gone to the odd midnight premiere and totally enjoyed the experience with a group of complete strangers, some of whom still like to dress up."

Outdoor cinemas and drive-ins are also seeing something of a resurgence, with some CHOICE members happy to watch from the comfort of their car. Some are seasonal, but most are comparatively better value.

Forego the extras

Even 3D-film pioneer and director James Cameron has admitted that seeing movies in 3D doesn't always add to the quality of the

experience – but it almost always adds to the price. Similarly, while it can be nice to watch films on larger screens, they often come with a fee. If you're happy to watch 2D movies on traditional-sized screens, stick to these cheaper sessions.

For those on a budget, avoiding the in-theatre snacks is also essential. The smell of buttery popcorn has long been associated with the movie experience, but is it really worth \$9 a tub? And do you really need that \$6 soft drink?

Save your cash and some kilojoules by bringing your own healthier drinks and snacks with you. It's particularly easy if you're going to a cinema in a shopping centre – "snacks from the supermarket

advance from that third party. Discounts can also be available through university bookshops, though you may need to be a student or on faculty to take advantage.

Another option is to purchase a Kare Kard or Entertainment Book, sold by charities, community organisations and clubs for fundraising throughout Australia. Kare Kards, which are sold online, cost \$49.95, with \$10 going to an organisation of the buyer's choice. Tickets bought with a Kare Kard are up to 35% off. Entertainment Books, available through third parties only, cost between \$50 and \$65, with 20% of earnings going to the seller. Tickets bought with vouchers from the book are up to 50% off.

They may not have the huge screens or the variety, but the local independent may be the cheaper way to take your family to the movies

are much cheaper", says Mel McDonald. Many cinemas will allow you to bring (reasonable) food with you – just don't try sneaking in a curry or any other hot food.

Join the club

In an effort to encourage return business and brand loyalty, some cinemas offer cheap days, discounted or free tickets and cheaper snacks for members. In some cases, such as Event Cinemas' Cine Buzz, joining up costs nothing. In others, such as Palace Cinemas' Movie Club, you may have to fork out an annual fee, but this often pays for itself in the form of gift vouchers upon joining and on your birthday. Some cinemas also have dedicated seniors, kids or parents clubs, which in some cases may well be worth joining – members of the Event Cinemas Seniors Club pay \$8 for movies (excluding Saturdays after 5pm).

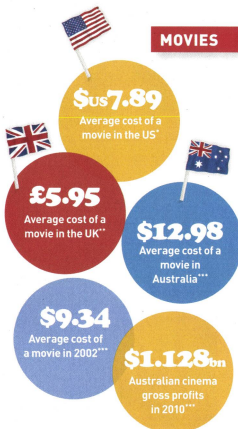
If you're unwilling or unable to join up at the cinema, a third-party discounter may do the trick. Members of some motoring associations and health funds, including the NRMA, RACQ and Medibank Private, are eligible for discounted tickets. The downside is that they generally need to be bought in

Foreign exchange

"Why are we charged so much compared with the US?" asks CHOICE member Alison Reilly. An indignant Helena Kearns adds: "It's less than half price in the US and Europe!"

Alison and Helena are on to something. The average price of a movie ticket in Australia for 2010 was \$12.98. In the US, however, the average ticket cost just \$US7.89 (about \$A7.30). Americans willing to wait a couple of months can even catch second- and third-run films in 3D at the Starplex Cinemas in California for \$US2, or \$US1 on Tuesdays. Snacks can be cheap as chips too – hot dogs start from \$US1.

A movie ticket in the UK will set you back on average £5.95, or about \$A9. But if you cough up the £10 annual membership fee, the Prince Charles Cinema in London screens classic films for as little as £1.50 a pop. Our trans-Tasman neighbours pay on average \$NZ11.05 (\$A8.55) for a 2D movie, and about \$1.50-2.50 extra for 3D. ■



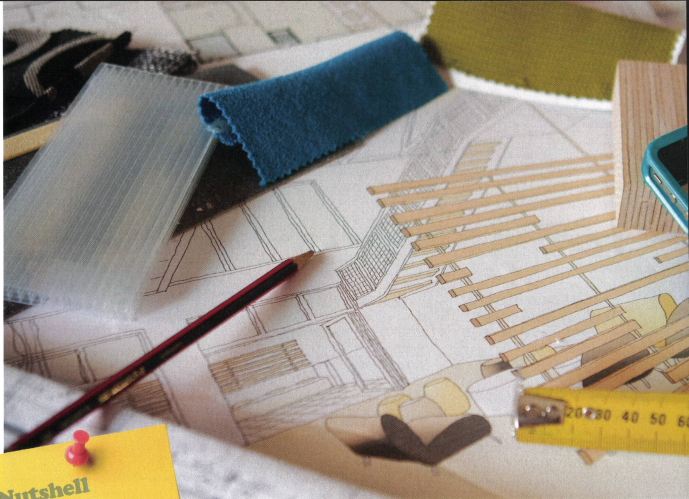
Do the maths

A family of two adults and two concession-card carrying students seeing a standard movie on a Saturday night at Hoyts Broadway, NSW, will pay \$67 for tickets alone (\$18 adults, \$15.50 concessions). Add a trip to the candy bar – a bag of Starburst Rattlesnakes (180g, \$5.10), a packet of Red Rock Deli chips (90g, \$4.40), two small cups of soft drink (600mL, \$5.20 each) and two Magnum ice creams (\$4.90 each) – and their evening out comes to \$96.70.

They can save cash by going to the same cinema on a Tuesday, when standard screening tickets are \$11. Downstairs at Coles they'll pay far

less for identical snacks: \$2.49 for the snakes, \$2.57 for the chips, \$6.90 for two 600mL bottles of Coke and \$6.60 for two Magnum ice creams. The entire cheaper outing costs \$62.56 – that's less than just tickets on the Saturday and a total saving of more than \$34.





Nutshell

- From 2012, building energy efficiency ratings will be displayed nationally when selling or renting residential properties.
- Education needs to be improved to ensure accuracy of the system.

Who's in charge?

All new homes and renovations must meet energy efficiency requirements mandated through the National Construction Code. It's then up to the state and territory bodies to implement the code and regulate the industry. A full list of the relevant state bodies is available at nathers.gov.au/contacts.html. Other important bodies include NatHERS, which sets out the standards for software requirements, and the Council of Australian Governments, which is in charge of developing the National Strategy for Energy Efficiency in partnership with the government.

Paper castles

Are building energy ratings an accurate performance indicator or just words on paper, asks **Brendan Mays**.

Homes account for about 10% of Australia's total carbon emissions. To meet 2020 carbon reduction goals, the federal government has steadily increased energy efficiency requirements on new buildings. In addition, from next year (an exact date has not yet been confirmed) efficiency ratings are to be disclosed on all homes rented or sold.

This scheme is already in place for large commercial buildings nationwide, and for all homes in the ACT. A government study into ACT house prices found that an energy rating improvement of one star will increase market value by three per cent on average, which can amount to tens of thousands of dollars. While many factors determine overall value, the study proved that a higher energy rating will raise the purchase price.

What are energy ratings?

In May 2011, the minimum energy standard for new buildings was increased to six stars (or equivalent, depending on your state). To calculate these energy ratings, building designers use special software to ensure that the building plan is consistent with efficiency measures. As well, there are other rating methods, such as meeting the deemed-to-satisfy (DTS) provisions of the construction code (see left).

Apart from the initial design stage, typically there is no further assessment to ensure recommended energy saving requirements are installed. In some cases, owners have been shocked when independent assessors rated their homes far less energy-efficient than they were told originally (see case studies, page 24). This could be the result of an incorrect evaluation, or building and

When it comes to energy efficiency, people are not being properly educated on the most efficient ways to use buildings to their design strengths

construction issues. Either way, there are clearly discrepancies between the rating listed on paper and the actual energy efficiency for some new homes being built.

The industry speaks

Dominic Ogburn is a building consultant and training specialist with more than 25 years' experience in the building industry. He's also a NSW Fair Trading Award winner for advancing consumer protection in the industry. In his opinion, the current regulation of building energy ratings for new homes is "pathetically inadequate".

"Basically, the building industry is left to self-regulate when it comes to installing energy savings measures," he says. "It's a conflict of interest for some developers who want to employ cost-cutting measures when completing a build."

But the buck doesn't always stop with builders. "Energy assessors typically work off the design, so you need to check whether they have the qualifications to perform post-build inspections properly," says Ogburn. "With ratings soon to be tied to property value nationally, sellers may also approach tame assessors to ensure a better rating."

Ogburn provided CHOICE with evidence of homes that don't comply with the plans provided through energy ratings software (see page 24). One building was missing compliance elements such as a rainwater tank, ceiling fans, properly installed draught seals, ventilation windows in the laundry and ceiling insulation, to name a few. "At the end of the day, consumers are paying a premium for a product that is not delivered as specified."

Dick Clarke, a building designer with 35 years' experience in energy-efficient design, is Sustainability Director for the peak industry body Building Designers Association of Australia and is a technical adviser on the *Your Home Technical Manual* produced by the Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency. He agrees with Ogburn that more training and education is needed within the industry. "If you have crappy installation, you will lose energy efficiency," he says. "Unfortunately, the certification process allows a conflict of interest that often downgrades the 'as built' result from the 'as designed' goal."

He also believes more post-build research is needed to help improve the energy efficiency software used in the design phase. "This will tell us not only how the buildings themselves are working, but also how people are using them." He says that people aren't being properly educated on the most efficient ways to use buildings to their design strengths.

Master Builders Australia also stresses that education is critical as the industry develops. Robert Appleton, National Director, Technical & Regulatory Policy, points out that "NATHERS increased ▶

Sprung a leak

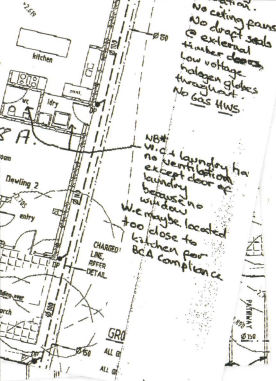
Jan Brandjes worked in some of the coldest climates on earth, including the Arctic, before coming to Australia to work in the building energy efficiency field. His company provides real-life testing of airflow issues that are typically calculated using energy efficiency software. This is designed to provide an accurate representation of whether builders have met the gap-sealing requirements that form part of energy efficiency compliance.

When Jan first came here, he was surprised at the lack of air-sealing in Australian homes. "I've tested hundreds of homes and found them to be consistently leaky. Because you lose most of your heating or cooling through air leakage, this has a strong effect on a building's energy efficiency." He also points out that it's about getting the right airflow balance, not about making homes too tight.

Jan says many of the problems can be fixed easily and for much less than adding other energy saving measures such as solar. "In many cases, exhaust fans in the bathroom and unsealed downlights are causing a lot of air leakage. This can easily be fixed." For a new home under construction, this cost can be as little as \$300, or \$1000-\$1500 for existing homes. Jan also believes that energy rating software assumes that Aussie homes are built a lot tighter than they really are. However, he's quick to point out that the fault lies in a lack of education, and would like to see more industry training along with better consumer understanding.



One great way to improve home energy efficiency while slashing your power bills is to take the 10% Challenge, a joint initiative from CHOICE and advocacy group DoSomething! Visit choice.com.au/10percent for more



These homes didn't comply with the plans provided through energy ratings software

the energy ratings requirements without a great deal of warning, which has created problems in several areas. As with any new regulations, there will be issues that need ironing out, but over time the market will adjust to meet the requirements."

The Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency has stated software is a tool for the design stage only and isn't designed to measure actual activity. Any issues with build specifications not matching the design are compliance issues. It also states that issues surrounding building energy ratings analysis will be addressed as part of the ongoing National Strategy for Energy Efficiency.

Litigation issues

The Association of Building Sustainability Assessors (ABSA) CEO, Alison Carmichael, says energy ratings of new homes and the corresponding thermal comfort of the end product depends very much on the building being constructed to plan. "Construction methods have a substantial impact on the result. You may buy the highest-performing thermal windows, but if they're not fitted with draught stopping, you can end up with substantial air leakage and lower levels of thermal performance than predicted."

The ACT recently moved to bring energy assessors under official licensing

requirements. This means they'll be subject to stricter regulation and held accountable for any errors they make that affect the energy rating of a building in the ACT. There are now two classes of energy assessors: Class A is qualified to inspect buildings on site, while Class B can only work from designs.

CHOICE VERDICT

New home builders, renovators and existing home owners can visit livinggreener.gov.au for advice on creating an energy-efficient home. Using an independent assessor to assist throughout the building or renovation cycles, or as an evaluation method for existing home

owners, may also be an option – just make sure your assessor is qualified to perform the tasks you require.

In the longer term, CHOICE believes a change to the law that sees new home owners formally select an appropriately qualified building surveyor could also help in cases of big housing developments. Mandatory post-design energy compliance checks would improve efficiency standards, but this would see up-front costs rise. Further improvement to assessor and builder education, energy testing measures, software and consumer knowledge are essential to ensuring the integrity of the system. ■

Case studies

Seeing stars

Jenny Edwards is a ratings assessor in the ACT. She typically assesses homes at the design stage for energy efficiency requirements and is licensed by the ABSA.

She recently bought a home with a rating of three stars with good orientation and sensible levels of window glazing. However, its thermal potential was significantly overstated due to 21 unsealed downlights and two exhaust fans without dampers not being included in the assessment. The house also received a good score for

wall insulation even though the walls were uninsulated, and ceiling insulation was patchy or non-existent.

Jenny's revised calculation put the home at about a one-star rating. She advises home buyers and builders to check the qualifications and experience of their energy assessors and to consider energy efficiency ratings as early in the design or purchase process as possible.



Compliance complaint

One house in north-western Sydney required more than \$100,000 worth of additional work to meet minimum government building and energy compliance issues, despite being certified for occupation. The buyers, Gillian and Stephen Kozicki, discovered this when they asked Dominic Ogburn (page 23) to audit the house. The vendor then exercised a contractual right to rescind the sale at the last minute. This left Gillian and her family looking for a hotel room, and later renting until they found a replacement home. After great time and

expense, she complained to the Building Professionals Board, and after eight months, minor disciplinary action was taken. Gillian believes the regulation of the industry is completely unacceptable and wants to see the system improved.





**BABY
ON
BOARD!**

Take a seat, safely

Australian parents may soon be able to buy baby seats with Isofix, but as **Zoya Sheftalovich** discovers, existing seats are safe.

The Australian Standard (AS) for child restraints in cars is now under review, and will likely allow the use of Isofix, an international child restraint system in which seats clip into attachment points manufactured into cars, from 2013.

"The next update will incorporate Isofix," confirms Craig Newland, chair of the committee that is drafting the new standard. "We just want to make sure there's compatibility with vehicles on the market. We don't make any backwards steps when it comes to child safety."

Background to Isofix

Isofix-type child seats are used in Europe, the US and Canada and enable seats to be quickly secured without using seat belts. There have been calls for the introduction of Isofix in Australia for some time, including from Professor Lotta Jakobsson, technical specialist at Volvo Cars Safety Centre in Sweden, who was in Australia earlier this year. But while Isofix's incorporation into the AS may provide greater choice for parents, it isn't necessarily safer than the current system.

"When Europe introduced Isofix they were coming from a lower safety base than Australia currently has," says Newland. "The main benefit is around reducing incorrect fitting."

The new system won't eliminate the need to professionally fit seats. "In the US, where studies have been done to see if their incorrect installation rate has dropped, the improvement wasn't dramatic," says Newland.

Jakobsson has also called for the introduction of rear-facing child seats for children up to age four. Resulting media coverage included claims that Australia's child restraint standards are less safe than European and American ones.

Parents should be more concerned with properly fitting restraints and ensuring children are kept in booster seats longer

In the US, the American Academy of Pediatrics and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration advised earlier this year that children should remain in rear-facing restraints until the age of two. In Sweden, rear-facing restraints are generally used until the child turns four.

What about Australia?

The AS allows for rear-facing restraints for children up to four years, but there are no such seats currently sold here. For one thing, space is a major issue. "Putting rear-facing seats in the back, means there is very little

room," explains Mike Lumley, technical director of manufacturer Britax. "[In Sweden they] put the seat in the front seat of the vehicle, which isn't permitted in Australia." Australian safety experts also argue that having children face forward from the age of six months in Australia is safe, largely due to the top tether system mandated by the AS. "The issue is that the AS is very different to the international one – we have different tether straps," says Christine Erskine, Executive Officer of Kidsafe NSW.

Professor Lynne Bilston of Neuroscience Research Australia, University of New South Wales, says the controversy is due in part to a lack of understanding of the local context. "Researchers have been looking for evidence of a problem in Australia for decades and there just isn't any. There are many cases of infants in forward-facing restraints who are the only survivors in crashes and are unharmed."

Dr Stuart Newstead, Senior Research Fellow, Monash University Accident Research Centre, agrees. "Car companies wheel in foreign experts who don't have an understanding of our local context."

Bilston says parents should be more concerned with properly fitting restraints and ensuring older children are kept in booster seats longer. "There are a lot of children not using a booster seat, even though in some cases they need one for secure seat belting until they're 12 years old."

You can check child restraint requirements for your state or find a professional fitter at www.kidsafe.com.au.





How shops sell you stuff

Despite the lure of online shopping, bricks-and-mortar stores still have a strong pull. **Hannah Grew** looks at how they keep us coming back.

With the Aussie dollar the strongest it's been for years, online shopping is increasingly attractive. Yet a recent survey of more than 12,000 CHOICE members shows bricks-and-mortar stores are still preferred for items such as clothing. What is it that keeps drawing us back?

The pull

Advertising is the ultimate enticement to buy more, irrespective of need. Ads are filled with images of happy, healthy, glamorous and, often, famous people. Their message is that looking or feeling just as great is as easy as hitting the shops to buy that coat, pants, dress or pair of shoes. The reality is far from this simple yet a little retail therapy can put a smile on many faces. Planned obsolescence is at the heart of retailing. Staying current is

encouraged with seasonal colour and style changes, despite those items at home still being in perfect working order.

Foot traffic

We're more at ease when others are around us. Locating popular anchor stores in malls attracts people, increasing sales. Equally, the notion of exclusivity draws customers to boutiques and concept stores, while the one-stop-shop idea sends customers to department stores. Newer to Australia are pop-up or temporary stores, where retailers use the limited shopping opportunity to draw in crowds.

Crossing the threshold

Necessity aside, many see shopping as a fun, social activity. Smart retailers capitalise on this group entertainment factor to differentiate themselves from online retailers. Position, displays and signage draw customers in, but enticement has now gone high-tech. In the US, smartphone apps such as Shopkick reward shoppers with points and offers simply for visiting stores and scanning products.

Follow me

Once you're inside, stores are designed to promote profitable browsing. Department stores and large multilevel stores often have a pre-planned path that shoppers are

encouraged to follow in order to see more and impulse buy. If you've ever popped into Ikea to buy a bowl and found yourself leaving three hours later with a loaded trolley, then you'll know just how effective this can be.

Research shows that a person's normal field of vision is about 170 degrees, so while paths are clearly visible, alternative routes through the store are harder to find.

Knowing noses

Store designers employ classic design triggers such as colour and lighting for visual appeal while ambient (sometimes prominent) music creates an environment tailored to the brand's target demographic.

Studies have shown that smell is more evocative than the other senses. Savvy brands use smells to lead consumers to their stores. This can be as simple as the waft of liquorice fragrance from a Darrell Lea shop, or as complex as creating a signature scent that customers will associate with a particular brand or experience. Smell affects how shoppers choose which stores to visit, how many items they compare, and how they evaluate purchases.

So the next time you head out for a quick trip to the shops and return home hours later loaded down with bags, you'll know those smart store designers have done their job well. ■

In the US, smartphone apps such as Shopkick reward shoppers with points and offers for simply visiting stores and scanning products

hair to : dye for?

They cost up to twice as much as supermarket products, but are health-store hair dyes any healthier? **Karina Bray** investigates.

Their packaging may contain reassuring images of fruit, plants and other food stuffs, but many health-store hair dyes with a "natural" image still contain plenty of chemicals, including the main allergy culprits. Closer inspection of products claiming to contain "certified organic" ingredients reveals most of the ingredients aren't actually certified organic – and the other chemicals are still there.

Given their higher price, is there any benefit to buying "natural" or "organic" hair dyes? Are standard supermarket hair dyes really so bad anyway?

Manufacturers aren't required to state exactly how much PPD is present and, depending on the colour, the level can vary

Problem chemicals

Many natural-sounding hair dyes variously claim to be free of ammonia, resorcinol, heavy metals, parabens and SLS and low in ethanolamine, hydrogen peroxide and PPD. So what do these chemicals normally do, and what's wrong with them?

Ammonia opens up the hair's cuticle and allows the pigment to penetrate the hair shaft. As well as a strong odour, it can be irritating and may create a burning sensation on the scalp.

Hydrogen peroxide, which activates the dye compounds as well as lightening hair, can also be irritating.

Ethanolamine (monoethanolamine, diethanolamine etc) is often used as an alternative in ammonia-free products, and is also a potential irritant. While there's some concern ethanolamines can create carcinogenic nitrosamines when combined with nitrosating agents, The Australian Society of Cosmetic Chemists recommends manufacturers ensure any amine-containing formulations don't also have nitrosating agents.

Resorcinol causes skin to peel, and is often used in acne treatments and in products for treating corns and callouses. It can sometimes cause allergies and be irritating. In hair dye it combines with PPD and similar compounds to create dyes.

Sodium lauryl sulfate (SLS) is a detergent and foaming agent often found in shampoo and toothpaste, that may dry or irritate skin. **Parabens** are preservatives often demonised for their potential oestrogenic effects.

While there's no persuasive evidence they're harmful, manufacturers are gradually replacing them with other preservatives. They're not widely used in hair dye products, so excluding them isn't a strong selling point.

Lead acetate is contained in some products, particularly those aimed at men, to help to restore hair colour. Lead is a potent neurotoxin that accumulates in soft tissues and bone, and is also a suspected carcinogen. However, it's permitted in hair products, subject to concentration restrictions. Studies have found that very little is absorbed into the blood through the scalp, though long-term cumulative effects haven't been studied. ▶

Bismuth citrate, another heavy metal, is sometimes used instead of lead acetate and is thought to be less toxic.

PPD and other allergens Permanent hair dyes contain ingredients that can cause allergies. Symptoms range from a burning sensation and redness or rash, to weeping blisters, chemical burns and severe swelling of the face. Anaphylactic shock is rare but can happen. The allergic reaction can occur at any time – from the first time you use dye or suddenly after many years of trouble-free use.

The main culprits are para-phenylenediamine (PPD), toluene-2,5-diamine (TD) and toluene-2,5-diamine sulphate (TDS). These are the ingredients that make the dye permanent when oxidised with hydrogen peroxide. PPD appears to have the strongest allergenic potential, followed by TD and TDS. PPD is in most permanent dye products, and is also found in some henna products for hair and temporary tattoos (see opposite and below). So getting a temporary tattoo may sensitise you to future contact.

PPD used to be banned from hair dyes in some European countries. But regulations now allow it to comprise up to six percent of a product. Manufacturers don't have to state exactly how much PPD is present and, depending on the colour, the level can vary – there tends to be more PPD in darker dyes. There are some products, such as Herbatint, which contain lesser amounts of PPD than other products, and this may help reduce the risk of developing an allergy.

Products with these sensitisers carry warnings and recommend a skin sensitivity (patch) test, where you apply a small amount of dye to your forearm or behind the ear.

If there is no reaction within 48 hours, it's presumed you are safe to use it. However, the

EU Scientific Committee on Consumer Products points out that this is no guarantee; there are many misleading and false-negative results, and it can take up to a week to react to the allergen, rather than 48 hours. They also point out the patch

test can actually sensitise people to the allergen, so when they apply the dye to their hair two days later they get a reaction.

While most people are likely never to develop a hair dye allergy, you can reduce the risk by not getting it on your skin, using gloves to apply the dye and making sure you don't leave it on longer than the recommended time.

Your options if you're allergic

- If you're allergic to PPD, you may also be allergic to TD and TDS as they're similar chemicals. However, studies have found it's possible to be allergic to one, but not others. So if you have a confirmed allergy to one, it could be worth trying a hair colour with the other – but do two patch tests a week apart, and only apply

DARK WARNINGS



These and some other henna products – especially black or dark henna – contain PPD and so are unsuitable for people with hair dye allergies. If you're buying henna products because you're allergic to conventional hair dyes, check the ingredients carefully. The Black Diamond product doesn't list its ingredients, a breach of a legal requirement for cosmetics sold in Australia. We suspect it may contain PPD because products called "black henna" often contain PPD, and also because there are allergy test instructions in the package, and allergies to pure henna are very rare.

Henna tattoos – steer clear

That "temporary" henna tattoo you or the kids get on holidays just may become a lasting souvenir. The girls in this picture got black henna tattoos while on holiday in Egypt, and a few days later blistered in a perfect replica of the original tattoos.

Para-phenylenediamine (PPD) is often used in henna to make it darker and to dry faster, and similar cases have been reported among Australians holidaying in Asia. They'll never be able to use hair dye containing PPD, and are also potentially allergic to para-aminobenzoic acid (PABA – found in some sunscreens), benzocaine and sulfonamides (a class of medicines that includes some antibiotics, diuretics and anticonvulsants).



colour to hair a week after a clear second patch test. If you've suffered a severe reaction in the past, try this only after consulting your dermatologist.

- Hydroxyethyl-para-phenylenediamine sulfate, another known sensitiser similar to PPD, has also recently been tested on people with PPD allergies – some reacted, but most did not.
- For mild allergies, ask your hairdresser for foils and specify that the dye doesn't touch your scalp, or stick with highlights using a cap.
- You could try henna hair dyes, including those mixed with indigo for a brown rather than red effect. Senna gives a golden tint to grey or blonde hair. Some plant dye products contain PPD (see left) or metallic salts, so check the ingredients list.
- Be careful: many products that suggest they're natural or organic still contain these chemicals.

- If you're allergic to hair dye, you may also be allergic to benzocaine, a topical anaesthetic used in some anti-itch creams, dental and medical ointments and cough drops.

Even if you're not allergic, hair dye may still irritate your scalp. Applying it to hair that hasn't been washed for a few days may reduce irritation as the natural oils and dirt on the scalp help protect skin against the irritants.

Do hair dyes cause cancer?

Use of hair dye has been associated with increased rates of cancer, in particular bladder cancer and non-Hodgkin lymphoma. The main risks were using hair dyes before 1980, after which carcinogenic dyes were removed from formulations, and the use of dark-coloured permanent dyes for more than 25 years.



Research on use of hair dyes since 1980 has not shown an increased risk of cancer.

CHOICE VERDICT

There are still plenty of chemicals, including potential allergens, in "natural" or "organic" hair dyes. The addition of certified organic food stuffs and other plant extracts doesn't mean they're any better for your health. The only real benefit lies in marketing potential, and possibly for agricultural producers, who get a premium for the organic products. If you just want to colour your hair and don't care about all the bells and whistles of plant extracts, save your money and buy a supermarket product. ■

NATURAL AND ORGANIC PRODUCTS

We found the following products in health food stores and pharmacies that are marketed as more "natural" than a typical supermarket hair dye.



Tints of Nature

"... the first long-lasting permanent hair colour to use certified organic ingredients." Claims not to contain ammonia, resorcinol or paraben. Contains PPD.



NaturStyle

"Discover NaturStyle, the natural way to colour your hair." Claims not to contain ammonia or resorcinol. Contains PPD.



Atlantis Watercolour

"...is developed using vegetable pigment to enrich and enliven your natural hair colour without the need for peroxide or ammonia". Claims not to contain ammonia or hydrogen peroxide; "may contain" phenylenediamines or TDS. When we tested this product in 2007 it rated equal-last overall.



Herbatint

"... is the first most natural hair-colouring gel to be free of harsh chemicals and ammonia. It incorporates proteins, botanicals and natural vegetal extracts ... that give hair its deep, natural shine and vibrant, healthy colour." Claims not to contain ammonia, parabens or resorcinol. Contains PPD at lower levels than other dyes.



Nature Colour

"This gentle and caring formula avoids many harsh chemicals such as ammonia and resorcinol, with the additional goodness of plant extracts to colour and condition your hair". Claims not to contain ammonia, resorcinol, SLS or paraben. Contains PPD.

If you're allergic to PPD, you may also be allergic to TD and TDS as they're similar chemicals

Sleep

on it

NUTSHELL

- Experts don't know why we need sleep, but they do know what happens when we don't get enough.
- Sleep deprivation affects your body in a number of ways. You can be experiencing these adverse effects even before you start to feel tired.

We spend a third of our lives sleeping, and we don't know why. While modern science is yet to explain the purpose of sleep, the consequences if we don't get enough are pretty clear.

Sleep deprivation and drowsiness may have been a factor in some of the world's most notable disasters, including the fiery end to the Challenger space shuttle, Chernobyl and the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill off the coast of Alaska. If you've ever pulled an all-nighter or been on a sleepless long-haul flight, you'll be familiar with the consequences – grogginess, grumpiness, reduced awareness and forgetfulness. In fact, just 17 hours of sustained wakefulness

As Australians adopt busier lifestyles, we're also becoming more sleep deprived. **Emily McCluskey** outlines why you may need more zzzzs.

leads to psychomotor deterioration equivalent to a blood alcohol level of up to 0.05%.

It's clear we need sleep to maintain normal cognitive functions. But given our increasing tendency to burn the candle at both ends, we're getting less sleep while expecting to achieve more. The truth is you may be sleep deprived without even realising – and the consequences can be amusing or downright dangerous.

Losing it

Have you ever misplaced your car keys and found them in the fridge, or put ice cream in the pantry? You may have been the victim of a partial microsleep – a period of involuntary sleeping while still appearing to be awake that can last a few seconds or a few minutes. A new study in rats suggests that when parts of your brain get tired they may go offline to take a nap while you're still conscious. This may be the first sign that your brain needs sleep.

Driving skills

Ever found yourself winding down the windows or turning up the music to stay alert while driving? By the time you feel sleepy you may have already had several microsleeps without even realising. Statistics show that fatigue plays a role in 20% of driver fatalities in NSW. Next time you start to feel tired, hand the keys to someone else if you can, or pull over if you can't.

Work woes

If your work is repetitive or requires solving lots of problems, losing sleep is not ideal for your career. Our concentration and thinking ability deteriorate the longer we remain awake; this means decreased accuracy and

efficiency. One night of insufficient sleep can result in a 20%-32% increase in mistakes and 14% increase in time needed to perform a task – not great if you're aiming for a promotion or working with heavy machinery.

5mins

You're likely to be sleep deprived if you take less than this to fall asleep at night.

Optimal time is 10-15 mins

11days

The longest scientifically documented time a person has gone without sleep

may lead to more munching and an expanding waistline.

Evidence also suggests that too little sleep increases your chances of cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, respiratory disorders and premature death.

400-750

Hours of lost sleep for new parents in the first year

How much do we need?

This is a question that still puzzles scientists. The standard answer is seven to eight hours a night, but the truth is more complicated. As with so many things, our genes largely dictate how much sleep we need and our sensitivity to sleep deprivation. Some people can tolerate large deficits with few problems, while others struggle with the loss of a couple of hours. The key is to know your body and get the right amount of sleep for you.

At the NYU Sleep Disorders Center, New York City, Dr David Rapoport coordinates the Sleep Research Program. One test they perform has the patient pressing a button every time they see a light flash, to test their alertness and reaction time. Many of his sleep-deprived subjects perform poorly at this exercise – they stop responding and then fall asleep in the chair.

While this test may sound quite straightforward, it actually illustrates something very significant. "We don't fall asleep if we are well rested," says Rapoport. "If you're falling asleep in boring situations, that is a sure marker you are not getting quite enough sleep."

So the next time you fall asleep during a dull film, remember this may say more about you than the skills of the director – it could be your body's way of telling you to hit the hay more often. ■

Moods

Virtual all levels of sleep deprivation adversely affect your mood. Losing a few hours may result in negative mood states, stress, loss of vigour and confusion. Some people even report anxiety, depression and increased moodiness. To keep your friends and family onside, you may need to increase your sleep duration.

Your health and waistline

As if things weren't bad enough, our 24/7 lifestyle could also be making us fat. Studies have shown a negative relationship between body mass index (BMI) and sleep duration – meaning the less we sleep, the higher our BMI. The lack of sleep affects timing of the release of some hormones, including leptin and ghrelin, which suppress and promote appetite respectively. Sleep deprivation

Are you sleep deprived?

If any of these sound familiar, you might benefit from some more sleep time.

- Constant yawning
- A tendency to doze off when in sedentary or boring situations
- Feeling groggy when waking up in the morning
- Feeling sleepy or groggy throughout the day

- Moodiness or poor concentration
- Shortened attention span
- Poor memory and decision-making skills
- Increased clumsiness
- If your symptoms persist despite more sleep, visit your GP to check for a sleep disorder, such as sleep apnoea. Your doctor may send you to a sleep clinic for further investigation.

Diary of a shift worker

In my days as a student, I was working night shifts

in hospitality while training during the day for a new position. I was constantly feeling tired, had difficulty concentrating and was making silly mistakes at work.

I was called in for an extra day shift after working through the night. I'd been running on very little sleep for a few weeks but hurried in as I needed the money.

"I remember zoning out on a bumper sticker on a nearby car. In my reverie I failed to notice I was entering a corner. I turned my head just in time to see a huge yellow concrete barrier. I let go of the wheel to cover my face and the car drove up the tram barrier, flipped over and spun down St Kilda Road on its roof.

"At the time I had no idea what happened or even where I was. Needless to say, I didn't make it in for my shift and managed to write off my car as well."



Ask the Experts

Got a niggling question our team can help with?



Steve Duncombe

I'm going overseas for a holiday and want to access the internet using Wi-Fi hotspots. How can I secure my computer from unwanted access?

CHOICE Computer's Steve Duncombe replies:

The first thing to do is enable the firewall built into your computer's operating system or security suite

software. Many suites feature Wi-Fi/hotspot protection that will automatically configure several security options on your computer for you at the touch of a button. For added protection you can also use third-party VPN (Virtual Private Network) software, which you can operate for free.

Consider these other safe practices:

- Disable Wi-Fi access or unplug your Wi-Fi dongle when not in use
- Set your computer to join wireless networks manually (don't let it automatically join networks it finds)
- Turn off file and printer sharing while at a hotspot

- Consider storing highly sensitive or personal data elsewhere, or in a closed, encrypted folder
 - Limit your emailing to casual communication and don't send any sensitive information (including replying to an email that includes sensitive information)
 - Limit your web surfing to safe and secure sites, preferably using https – for example, access Gmail using <https://www.gmail.com> – for a more secure connection
 - Don't use banking sites or perform any financial transactions online at a public hotspot
 - Make sure the hotspot you're joining is legitimate and has security in place – check the company's conditions and security policies, which should be offered before you connect.
- In other words, treat hotspots like the potentially dangerous security risks they really are!

I am intending to pass incoming signals through a set-top box (STB) to an analog VCR and then to a digital TV. Does this cause a poorer viewing of digital stations?

CHOICE test coordinator and TV expert Scott O'Keefe replies:

In a word, yes. An STB can usually provide a digital video output to a TV, so there's no loss of quality. But digital-to-analog conversion and downscaling must occur to provide an analog input to the VCR, and this is where quality will be lost, especially for HD channels.

An antenna splitter could be used so each device has its own signal, then at least you can enjoy the quality of digital TV. On the other hand, some STBs and VCRs have an antenna pass-through facility, so you don't even have to buy a splitter.

The best claimed daily output for a 1.5kW solar system is a little more than 6kWh on average. Considering 1.5kW output for an hour is 1.5kWh, why is the daily output not closer to 18kWh (over 12 hours)?

Dr Torsten Lehmann from the School of Electrical Engineering and Telecommunications, UNSW, replies: Solar panels are usually labelled with their peak output power. In order to output that power, they need direct sunlight shining onto them perpendicularly, to be the right temperature (panels are rated at 25°C) and to be fitted with a maximum-power tracker.

Eight rather than 12 hours is a more realistic daily sunlight average over the year – near sunrise and sunset the sun's angle to the solar panel is too shallow to do any good. Cloud cover is very important, and some locations are better than others. You get more sun in summer, but the panels heat up, which lowers the output.

The panels also have to be mounted correctly – typically at the right angle at equinox. Often panels are not mounted due north at the correct angle because of constraints of the roof.

So with a 1.5kW system, you should not expect more than 9kWh/day output at best, with 6kWh/day more likely.



Dr Torsten Lehmann

Ask us

Do you have a question for one of CHOICE's experts? Email us at asktheexperts@choice.com.au or write to us at Ask the Experts, CHOICE, 57 Carrington Rd, Marrickville, NSW 2204.

Dishwashers that sacrifice performance for water or energy savings don't wash with us

Lab Tests

Tablet computers, smartphone GPS apps, strollers and juicers – they're all on test here



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Can any rival the iPad?

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You'll never get lost again

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The goods on these groomers

CHOICE dishwasher expert Graham Byrne finds himself knee-deep in dirty dishes this month

CHOICE. The People's Watchdog

CHOICE has its own testing laboratories where our experienced technical staff puts products through their paces. We use test methods based on Australian standards, and we develop our own to match the way consumers use a product in their homes. We buy the products we test, maintaining our independence from manufacturers, and so we know what you're faced with in the shops. Our recommendations are based on a product's quality and performance, with no hidden bias.

CHOICE SHOPPER For the best deal on products where you see this logo, call 1300 360 655. Have the model name and number, the price you've been quoted and your **CHOICE** subscriber number.

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When you see one of these tags, there is more information about this test at www.choice.com.au.

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Touch and go

Tablet computers are the new black, but do you need one? **Steve Duncombe** explains your options.

The idea of a tablet computer has been around for years, but only recently has the technology really caught up to the concept, with the launch of the iPad just over a year ago. The iPad's success has seen a flood of new tablets hit the market this year. But how do they measure up? We rounded up 23 tablets (see *CHOICE Computer*, July/August 2011) to see which make the grade.

Why a tablet?

New technologies have converged to make the tablet possible, including super-small, fast and energy-efficient processors, responsive finger-touch screens, ultra-slim long-life batteries, dedicated

touchscreen-driven operating systems (OS) and plenty of cheap or free programs that are readily available and easy to download – not to mention the explosion in digital music and video. Then there's the availability of cheap, plentiful broadband internet and the spread of wireless networking (Wi-Fi) and 3G data networks.

With no physical keyboard, mouse or dedicated touchpad to get in the way, the screen itself can be anything you want it to be, operated by the most intuitive tools in the world – your fingers. This is one reason that tablets are becoming so popular for education – some schools and universities have rolled them out to students and teachers alike. With the right software, anything you need just pops up on screen including, if required, a keyboard for instant access to web browsing, email and social networking. A tablet can also just as easily and effectively be a drawing pad, a notepad, a book or magazine, an artist's canvas or even a musical instrument.

Stores and more

It's the programs that run on tablets, commonly known as apps, that have really captured the imagination of software developers and users. Apple pioneered a marketplace for almost anybody to develop apps to sell through – the online Apple App Store. Soon apps were available either free or at very low cost covering every interest category – literature, art, music, science, sport, games, medicine, education and more. The relatively low cost of tablet apps and the ease of obtaining them has fuelled booming tablet sales. At last official count,



Nutshell

- Apple's iPad still dominates the tablet computer category, with many iPad-specific apps available.
- Some tablets running on the rival Android operating system are shaping up as a viable alternative.

Apple's App Store had some 425,000 apps available for iOS, the OS that runs on the iPhone, iPad and iPod Touch. More than 90,000 of those are specially made for the iPad.

Google's Android OS, the biggest challenger to iOS, has more than 300,000 apps available through the Android Market, though not all models have full access to this, and most apps currently available are designed for smartphones. Many of those apps will work on Android tablets, but as with the iPad more tablet-specific apps are appearing. Some brands have their own limited versions of app

stores, and you may want to consider this when selecting a model, as some, such as the Archos Ziistore, are downright disappointing.

What about Windows?

Windows is the third OS entrant in the tablet wars but can't yet compete with the other two. There is

currently no app store equivalent, and our testing clearly shows the need for more development of Windows as a tablet platform. The two Acer tablets on test tell the story: The Acer Iconia Tab A500 (above right), which runs on an Android OS, rates second in our test, outperforming by far Acer's Windows-based Iconia W500, which doesn't make our recommended list. ■

More than
90,000 apps are
available
specifically for
the iPad

WHAT TO BUY



84%

Apple iPad 2, \$949

Good points

- Highest overall, ease of use, performance and build quality scores.
- Excellent app store and touchscreen performance.
- Syncs all content with Mac and PC.
- Longest battery life.

Bad points

- Very low camera resolution.
- No support for Adobe Flash.



70%

Acer Iconia Tab A500, \$579

Good points

- Second-highest overall and ease of use scores.
- Third-highest performance score
- Equal second-highest build quality score.
- Second-longest battery life.
- Access to full Android Market.
- Syncs with PC.
- Five megapixel camera.

Bad points

- None to mention.



69%

Motorola Xoom, \$840

Good points

- Second-highest performance score.
- Third-highest overall and ease of use scores.
- Equal second-highest build quality score.
- Third-longest battery life.
- Access to full Android Market.
- Five megapixel camera.

Bad points

- No synchronisation with PC.



67%

Samsung Galaxy Tab 10.1v, \$729

Good points

- Access to full Android Market.
- Eight megapixel rear camera.

Bad points

- No synchronisation with PC.



67%

Samsung Galaxy Tab P 1000, \$999

Good points

- Equal second-highest build quality score.
- Access to full Android Market.

Bad points

- Older Android 2.2 OS.

WHAT ABOUT NETBOOKS?

Not long before the iPad, netbooks took the world by storm, promising the holy grail of portable computing: a laptop small, light and cheap enough to be everybody's on-the-go link to the electronic world. The flurry of excitement somewhat cooled when users discovered restrictions such as slow speed, limited features and tiny keyboards that were difficult to use. Newer netbooks are more powerful and better featured and appeal to those who want a familiar operating environment – usually Windows – with a physical keyboard and touchpad. Netbooks, however, don't have the versatility of a tablet.

A to B with a phone

With phones getting smarter, can you trust a mobile to tell you where to go? **Denis Gallagher** takes a look.



Most smartphone owners have the Google Maps application (or app) that shows your current position and how to get around. However, for between \$50 and \$90 (plus the cost of a cradle – see What to Look For, opposite) you can get an app on your phone that will work just like a car navigation device, with safety camera warning, trip planning and advanced lane guidance. CHOICE checked out 12 GPS applications available for the Apple iPhone, Android and Nokia smartphones for ease of use and their performance around the city and rural areas, as well as examining the online purchase and installation experience.

While Google Maps is free and performs well as a basic car navigation application it's not nearly as feature-rich as the other GPS apps on test. Also, map data is downloaded to the phone while driving rather than reading a complete map on the phone's memory. For anything other than short-

distance city driving, you'll need a good-sized data plan to avoid cost blow-outs when using Google Maps. Although figures can vary dramatically depending on the network used and how you view Google Maps, expect to use about 2MB for every 10 kilometres of driving.

Installation irritations

A smooth and stress-free purchasing process is an important part of the whole app experience. Unfortunately, this is where Android Market pales in comparison with Apple's App Store. Apps are often downloaded directly to your smartphone, but due to the download size it usually requires a Wi-Fi connection rather than a 3G phone network. iPhone users can download apps to their computer and transfer the app to the iPhone.

Android Market works similarly to the App Store. However, the installation process is generally far more complicated. Our tester wasted hours trying to enter complex codes of more than 50 digits for one Android app, with many rejections for no apparent reason. ▶



Nutshell

- ▶ The top-scoring car GPS apps are as good as most dedicated car GPS devices for performance.
- ▶ A good quality bracket is recommended if you want to use your phone for car navigation on a regular basis.
- ▶ Google Maps is a free option if you have a good network data plan and don't travel in rural areas.

PERFORMANCE		
	Platform	Overall score (%)
Tom Tom	iPhone	83
Sygyic Aura (A)	Android	76
Sygyic Aura Drive (A)	iPhone	74
Google Maps Navigation (Beta)	Android	73
Ndrive	Android	69
Co Pilot Live	iPhone	66
Navigon	iPhone	66
iGo myway	iPhone	66
Ovi Maps	Nokia	63
Metview	iPhone	63
Navigon MobileNavigator	Android	58
NavFree	iPhone	56

USING THE TABLE Scores The overall score is made up of: City performance: 20%; Rural performance: 20%; Verbal instructions: 20%; Ease

**WRONG
WAY
GO BACK**

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Points of interest (POI)

are a great way to quickly select landmarks such as hospitals, police stations, shopping centres, tourist attractions and so on. Some apps also allow you to call these places by selecting the phone number on the screen.

Advanced lane guidance

Tells you when to move to the exit lane and clearly displays complex multi-lane manoeuvres.

Routing options to exclude toll roads, unsealed roads or highways from the calculated route.

Walking mode allows you to plot a route for pedestrians, such as taking a short-cut through a park.

School zones Some tell you when you're approaching a school, while others show a speed alert only.

Text to speech (TTS) The GPS announces



the street name so you know when to turn without having to glance at your phone's screen. Some models provide a choice of more than one voice.

Speed alert warns you when you exceed the speed limit for the road you're currently on. However, speed limit data in the GPS can sometimes be inaccurate so don't rely solely on the GPS for this information – check the speed limit signs.

Remote trip planning (also known as A-B routing) allows you to plan and run through

your driving route in virtual mode before leaving.

Trip log records your travels and saves the information to post online in an application such as Google Earth.

Full-route display Most devices project this as a line on the map from your existing position through to your destination.

Traffic information as a

paid option allows you to collect live traffic information supplied by an organisation such as SUNA.

A car cradle is recommended if you use a car GPS regularly. Prices range from \$30 for a simple bracket up to \$160 for a unit with GPS enhancement and ability to charge the phone and link with your car's stereo.



FEATURES

	score (%)																				
Verbal instructions score (%)	Ease of use score (%)	Display quality score (%)	Points of interest score (%)	Install score (%)	Map refresh score (%)	Ready to navigate (sec)	Advanced lane guidance	Landmarks	Walking mode	Cycling mode	Safety camera warning	Fixed speed camera warning	Explore map	Remote trip planning	Itinerary planning	Trip log	Music playback controls	Traffic information	Requires phone network access to navigate	Contact	Price paid (after conversion to SA)
85	78	80	96	90	70	10	✓		✓				✓	✓	✓	✓				tomtom.com	90
63	82	70	81	20	100	11	✓	✓				✓	✓		✓	✓		(B)		sygic.com	56
53	82	70	77	90	90	13	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓		✓	✓		(B)		sygic.com	60
52	83	70	90	90	60	3			✓								✓	✓		google.com.au/mobile	Free
85	78	65	77	40	70	6	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓		✓				✓	ndrive.com	56
62	90	80	73	90	100	9	✓		✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			alk.com	60
62	64	65	82	90	80	5	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			(B)		navigon.com	90
67	75	70	81	90	80	9	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			igomyway.com	37
75	37	65	77	90	80	6		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓		✓			nokia.com.au	Free
68	75	65	45	90	80	7	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓				✓			metroview.com.au	24
60	72	65	72	60	80	10	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					(B)		navigon.com	56
57	43	65	86	90	90	5			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	navmii.com	Free

Score: 10%, Display quality: 10%, Points of interest: 10%, App install score: 5%, Speed of map refresh 5%. **Features** See What to Look For, above. **Price** Price paid, as of July 2011 with currency conversion in euros or US\$ into SA\$. **TABLE NOTES (A)** Application replaced with Sygic GPS Navigator. Existing customers of earlier Sygic GPS apps are offered a free upgrade. **(B)** Optional extra.

WHAT TO BUY



83%

Tom Tom (iPhone), \$90

Good points

- Excellent city performance.
- Very good verbal instructions.
- Option to avoid unsealed roads.

Bad points

- Rural performance only OK.
- No trip logs.



76%

Sygic Aura (Android), \$56

Good points

- Best rural performance of the models on test.
- Excellent city performance.
- Very easy to use.

Bad points

- Installation process is not as easy as installing on an iPhone.



74%

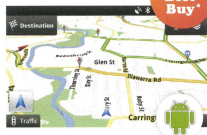
Sygic Aura Drive (iPhone), \$60

Good points

- Excellent city performance.
- Very easy to use.

Bad points

- Not as good as Android version for rural performance.



Best Buy

73%

Google Maps Navigation BETA (Android), free

Good points

- Excellent city performance.
- Very easy to use.
- Fast start-up.

Bad points

- Uses your network data for navigation updates.
- No POI calling, trip logs or speed measurement.

ABOUT THE REST

Ndrive performed well in the city but less so in the rural area and was difficult to install with various keys and authentication processes to go through. The overall score for the **Navigon MobileNavigator** was affected by its mediocre Android installation experience, but if you can cope with those hassles, you should be satisfied with its performance on the road if you stay

in the city. Stick to city driving if you want to use **Navigon**, **iGo myway**, or **Ovi Maps** on a Nokia phone or **Co Pilot Live**, as these apps didn't do well in rural testing. The **NavFree** app seems a pointless exercise, as just like Google Maps Navigation BETA you need to use your network data allocation, but unlike Google Maps, you may not get to your destination in rural areas.

Keep your hands on the wheel

You can use a smartphone as a car GPS if it's in a hands-free mount – except in Tasmania, where legislation introduced in 2009 prohibits use of a mobile phone for navigation, even if it's in a cradle. A fine of \$300 and three demerit points make a printed map (and a calm co-pilot to interpret it) or a dedicated car

GPS the best option for the Apple Isle. For the rest of Australia, in-car mount kits range from simple cradles to devices with an embedded GPS chip to enhance the phone's inbuilt GPS chip. You'll also need a car charger, as GPS apps can quickly drain the battery.



*For users on 1GB plus data plans.





Hanging on the telephone

Landline phones remain in the communication mix for most homes, says **Denis Gallagher**.

NUTSHELL

- >> Untimed local calls are still an attractive feature of a landline phone.
- >> Bundling deals can significantly reduce the cost of having a landline phone in your home.

CHOICE tested 11 of the latest cordless phones to find out which are easy to use, deliver good quality sound and have a long range. None of the phones on test has an answering machine, but this service can be offered by your phone service provider. All these phones were tested with an additional handset and scored for how easy it is to hook up that additional handset to the system. The base unit

connects to a phone line jack and power point to operate, while the additional charger and extra handset can be used wherever there is a spare power point.

While sales for cordless landline phones remain flat, models using the Digital Enhanced Cordless Telecommunications (DECT) system dominate, with four out of five phones sold using DECT. As we outlined in *CHOICE*, February 2011, DECT phones are less prone to interference from devices such as Wi-Fi wireless routers and media players. All phones on test use DECT except the Panasonic KX-TG4382ALT (which is FHSS 5.8GHz).

When looking for a phone, don't be bamboozled by terms such as DECT 6.0, 360 DECT and ECO DECT – the technologies are essentially the same. ▶

Demand a better deal

Don't sit back and accept your monthly phone bill as inevitable. Telcos such as Telstra and Optus don't want to see customers abandoning their landline in favour of mobiles from cheaper network carriers. Check out the bundle deals on offer, such as free local calls when you combine several services. If nothing is advertised, let their customer

service team know you aren't happy with the prices and see what they can do. You'll be surprised at how quickly they'll offer a discount to keep you happy.

1 million

DECT phones sold in Australia last year

14%

Percentage of consumers who only have a mobile and no landline

WHAT TO BUY



85%
Panasonic
KX-TG2512ALT, \$79

Good points

- Equal-best sound quality.
- Best range performance of the models on test.
- Very easy to use.
- Very good battery life.

Bad points

- No backlit keypad.
- Can't add extra handset.
- Not as fully featured as other top-performing models.



81%
Uniden
XDECT 7015+1, \$130

Good points

- Excellent battery performance.
- Hearing aid compatible (HAC) with T-Coil support.
- Very easy to use.

Bad points

- Takes almost nine hours to fully charge.
- Handset ringer volume is the lowest of the phones on test.



80%
Siemens Gigaset A580IP,
\$179 (single handset)

Good points

- Excellent range.
- Very easy to use.
- Hearing aid compatible (HAC) with T-Coil support.
- SMS support (if activated by phone network provider).

Bad points

- Most expensive model on test if used as a two handset solution.

PERFORMANCE											FEATURES							SPECIFICATIONS								
	Overall score (%)	Ease of use score (%)		Sound quality score (%)		Range score (%)	Battery life score (%)	Additional handset score (%)		Talk time (hrs:mins)	Standby time (days)	Charging time (hrs:mins)	Range (m)	Backlit keypad	GAP compatible	SMS support	Headset port	Hands-free	Hearing aid compatible	Out-of-range warning	Privacy mode	Wall mountable	Can use other rechargeable NiMH batteries	Speed dial/total phone book	Adjustable ringer volume settings (handsets)	Handset ringer volume (dB)
Panasonic KX-TG2512ALT	85	88	70	95	88	75	22:00	8.5	4:30	100								✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	0/50	6	73
Uniden XDECT 7015+1	81	81	66	83	96	80	22:00	10	9:00	85	✓							✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	0/70	4	69
Siemens Gigaset A580IP	80	82	69	91	80	75	23:00	6.5	3:00	95	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	9/150	6	78
Siemens Gigaset AS280	79	73	69	87	90	75	23:00	8.5	5:10	90	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	9/80	6	80
Siemens Gigaset C380 (A)	79	84	70	83	70	90	24:00	4	3:40	85	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	9/150	6	79
Uniden DECT 1015+1	77	86	69	79	61	90	5:30	10	9:20	80						✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	0/30	4	80
Uniden DECT 3015+1	77	88	70	55	84	85	16:30	10	8:20	50	✓					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	0/100	4	75
Oricom ECO70-1	72	69	65	59	89	85	18:30	10	12:10	55		✓					✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	0/10	6	87
Oricom ECO80-2	71	87	55	55	69	90	15:00	7.5	9:10	50	✓						✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	2/50	6	89
Panasonic KX-TG4382ALT (A)	71	84	63	51	65	100	7:00	10	3:30	45						✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	0/50	4	84
Telstra 9000 twin	71	73	66	59	84	75	16:30	10	9:10	55	✓											✓	✓	0/50	6	78

USING THE TABLE The overall score is made up of: Ease of use: 30%; Sound quality: 20%; Range: 20%; Battery life: 20%; Additional handset 10%. Price Recommended retail, as of July 2011.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Volume If hearing is an issue for you, look for a phone that provides extensive volume adjustment on the handset and a high handset speaker volume and ringer loudness level.

Large, clearly marked keys and a backlit keypad can make calls in low light easier.

Call waiting lets you know when someone is trying to call you while you're talking to someone else. Although all models on test have this feature, check with your phone network provider to see if there is an additional charge for this service.

Night mode You can set the phone not to ring during a specified time period – very handy for a good night's sleep, although only the Panasonic KX-TG4382ALT in this test has this feature.

Hearing aid-compatible (Tele-Coil or T-Coil) support allows the caller's voice to be directly fed from the phone to your hearing aid, helping to filter out background noise when listening through the handset speaker.

Handsets supported column in the table below shows how many handsets of the same model can be used. If you know how many handsets you may need, we'd advise buying the complete set rather than adding handsets later as this can be costlier.

Conference call means you can allow an outside caller to join in on a conversation with another person at home using the extra handset in a three-way call.

Privacy mode means you can stop another handset in the house from interrupting your incoming call or listening in on your conversation.

Phone book allows you to store your favourite contact numbers and dial the number by selecting the contact. Some of the models on test also have a speed dial feature for up to 10 numbers.

Caller ID All models on test have this, showing the phone number on the screen unless the caller has it blocked, although you may need to have the service

activated by your phone company.

Batteries While all cordless phones come with rechargeable batteries, some models can use standard AAA NIMH rechargeable batteries, which are less expensive and more readily available. **Digital system** DECT 6 and ECO DECT are both names for another virtually identical technology, namely DECT 1.8 – operating within the 1.8-1.9GHz band, a frequency range reserved for cordless phones. Only the Panasonic KX-TG4382ALT does not use some form of DECT 1.8.

Generic Access Profile (GAP) If a model supports this you can use another GAP handset from any other manufacturer simply by plugging the handset into a power point. However, GAP compliance extends only to basic operations, which means that added features such as phone books may not work.



COSTS

Total ringtones	Polyphonic ringtones	Handsets supported	Contact	Extra handset price (\$)	Price (\$)
10	5	2	panasonic.com.au	na	79
7	3	6	uniden.com.au	60	130
15	5	6	gigaset.com.au	70	179*
10	0	6	gigaset.com.au	70	69
15	5	4	gigaset.com.au	70	129*
2	2	2	uniden.com.au	na	50
7	7	6	uniden.com.au	40	70*
9	5	5	oricom.com.au	50	50*
9	5	4	oricom.com.au	80	120
7	4	2	panasonic.com.au	na	129
5	5	3	telstrahomophones.com.au	30	50

LEARNERS * Price for single handset model. na Not applicable – can't sort extra handsets. (A) Discontinued, but may be available in some stores.

ABOUT THE REST

The **Siemens Gigaset A5280** is an easy-to-use entry-level phone with good all-round performance. The **Uniden DECT 1015+1** and **Telstra 9000 twin** are the only models on test without a speakerphone option, but deliver a good basic two handset solution for \$50, with the Uniden providing better ease of use and range. If you want to free your hands to continue with other tasks while talking, a headset jack is available on the **Panasonic KX-TG4382ALT** and

Siemens C380, which also supports SMS to mobile phones. The **Uniden 3015+1** is very easy to use with good sound quality, although its range is not as extensive as the top-performing models. The **Oricom ECO80-2** has a sound boost feature and along with the **ECO 70-1** delivers very good volume levels for ringer, speaker and earpiece, but our testers found the sound quality for the ECO80-2 to be the worst of the phones on test.

Internet calls starting to make sense

The **Siemens Gigaset A580IP** is easy to use as a normal landline phone and also has true voice over the internet protocol (VoIP) support. This means you can make cheaper VoIP calls (providing your ISP supports this service) without needing an analog telephone adapter (ATA) – just plug the line directly from the modem into the phone and call. With the National Broadband Network and cheaper broadband pricing both in the pipeline, VoIP may finally deliver on its promise of cheap local calls with good voice quality.



WHAT TO BUY

These models passed our key safety and durability tests.



Bertini X4 Lite and Gliding Seat, \$1167

Good points

- Adjustable handle height.
- Reversible seat direction.
- Rain and leg covers.
- Padded shoulder straps.

Bad points

- Hard to manoeuvre in small areas.
- Bottom basket can fall off easily.



Chicco Liteway, \$299

Good points

- Very easy to carry when folded.
- Leg cover.
- Padded shoulder straps.
- Bottom basket can be removed and used as a backpack.

Bad points

- Crotch strap length not adjustable.
- Tip of brake pedals can catch on stairs or kerbs.



Childcare Vector XT, \$248

Good points

- Reversible handle.
- Boot cover.

Bad points

- Bottom basket fabric tore in our test.
- Shoulder straps may not be long enough for a bigger child and have no comforter pads.
- Pedals for front wheels' swivel locks are small and difficult to apply by foot.



Maclaren Volo, \$250

Good points

- Light and very easy to carry when folded.
- Rain cover.

Bad points

- Very difficult to adjust the waist and crotch strap lengths.
- Seat/backrest not reclinable.
- No comforter pads on shoulder straps.



Mothercare Whizzi, \$189

Good points

- Compact when folded up, light and very easy to carry.
- Rain cover.
- Padded shoulder straps.

Bad points

- Waist straps are very short and not long enough to fit a bigger child.



Mountain Buggy Swift, \$599

Good points

- Easy to manoeuvre on rough terrain.
- Padded shoulder straps.
- Adjustable handle height.

Bad points

- Tyre valve difficult to access when inflating the tyre, and pump is not included.
- Crotch strap length not adjustable.



Love N Care Europa,
\$499

Good points

- Easy to manoeuvre on rough terrain.
- Adjustable handle height.
- Insect cover.
- Padded shoulder straps.

Bad points

- Bulky when folded and feels heavy.
- Fenders can catch on stairs or kerbs.



Maclaren Quest Sport,
\$340

Good points

- Light and very easy to carry.
- Rain cover.

Bad points

- Very difficult to adjust waist and crotch straps.
- Difficult to adjust leg support.
- No comforter pads on shoulder straps.

740,000

Estimated number of
strollers sold per year
in Australia

**Did you
know?**

Almost all the world's
strollers are made
in China



Steelcraft Holiday,
\$98

Good points

- Light and very easy to carry.

Bad points

- Crotch strap is a bit long even when adjusted to its shortest length.
- Very limited access to bottom basket when seat is fully reclined.
- No comforter pads on shoulder straps.



Steelcraft Profile,
\$179

Good points

- Very easy to carry when folded.
- Padded shoulder straps.
- Leg cover.

Bad points

- Backrest mechanism isn't easy to access when standing.
- Brake pedals can catch on stairs.

ABOUT THE REST

The **Babysmart**, **Zuzu**, **Silver Cross** and **Emmaljunga** have minor safety or durability failures, but are all still worth considering.

The other models all failed at least one important safety or durability test and so are not recommended.

Folding mechanisms and locks are common points of failure. For example, they may

not have two
independent
locking

mechanisms
as required
by the
standard, or
may break
during testing. ▶

For full
details about
strollers, including how
we test, go to choice.
com.au/strollers



	PERFORMANCE			FEATURES					SPECIFICATIONS						
	Passed all our key safety tests	Passed all our durability tests	Ease of use score (%)	Number of wheels	Reversible handle / seat direction	Backrest recline / seat tilt positions	Suitable for newborn	Front bar or tray	Rear brakes linked	Maximum recommended weight of child (kg)	Bottom basket capacity (kg)	Stroller weight (kg) *	Dimensions (cm, H x W x D) **	Contact	Price (\$)
RECOMMENDED															
Bertini X4 Lite and Gliding Seat	✓	✓	60	4	-/✓	4/-	✓	Bar	✓	20	4	15.7	116 x 65 x 110	bertini.com.au	1167
Chicco Liteway	✓	✓	65	4	-/-	5/-	✓			18	4.5	7.9	104 x 55 x 98	chicco.com.au	299
# Childcare Vector XT	✓	✓	65	4	✓/-	5/-	✓	Bar		17	3	12.3	103 x 52 x 106	cnprands.com.au	248
Love N Care Europa	✓	✓	65	3	-/-	(C)/-	✓	Bar	✓	25	5	12.8	113 x 62 x 135	lovenecare.com.au	499
# Maclaren Quest Sport	✓	✓	65	4	-/-	4/-			✓	20	2	6.4	104 x 49 x 86	cnprands.com.au	340
Maclaren Volo	✓	✓	65	4	-/-	-/-			✓	17	2	4.8	103 x 48 x 88	cnprands.com.au	250
Mothercare Whizzi	✓	✓	65	4	-/-	(C)/-	✓		✓	15	2	6.0	110 x 49 x 94	mothercare.com.au	189
Mountain Buggy Swift	✓	✓	65	3	-/-	(C)/-	✓	Bar	✓	35	5	10.6	107 x 60 x 128	mountainbuggy.com	599
# Steelcraft Holiday	✓	✓	65	4	-/-	5/-	✓			17	4	7.6	104 x 47 x 89	britax.com.au	98
Steelcraft Profile	✓	✓	65	4	-/-	5/-	✓	Bar		17	4	8.4	105 x 50 x 90	britax.com.au	179
WORTH CONSIDERING															
# Babysmart Beema Evo	✓	(B)	70	3	-/-	3/-	✓	Bar	✓	22	5	12.8	112 x 59 x 140	babysmart.com.au	440
Emmalunga Nitro City	(A)	✓	60	4	-/✓	4/-		Bar	✓	15	5	13.5	112 x 58 x 115	valco.com.au	1599
# Silver Cross Dazzle	(A)	✓	65	4	-/-	(C)/-	✓		✓	15	ns	8.6	109 x 50 x 82	silvercross.com.au	429
# Zuzu Trini	✓	(B)	70	3	-/-	3/-	✓	Bar	✓	17	4.5	13.7	111 x 64 x 134	zuzu.com.au	198
NOT RECOMMENDED															
Graco Mirage	✓		65	4	-/-	3/-	✓	Tray	✓	15	5	7.2	104 x 50 x 102	(03) 8787 3838	138
# Love N Care Zooper Nero	✓		65	4	✓/-	4/-	✓	Bar		22	5	11.7	106 x 52 x 100	lovenecare.com.au	299
Mamas and Papas Mylo	✓		60	4	-/✓	3/-	✓	Bar	✓	15	3	13.7	112 x 60 x 116	childsmart.com.au	1550
Mothercare Spin	✓		70	4	-/✓	-/3	✓	Bar	✓	15	2	12.5	109 x 60 x 100	mothercare.com.au	895
# Mother's Choice Cachet	✓		65	4	-/-	3/-	✓	Tray	✓	20	4	8.5	100 x 53 x 92	igcdorel.com.au	149
Peg Perego Skate System	✓		70	4	-/✓	-/3	✓	Bar	✓	15	5	13.8	117 x 68 x 90	nurseryelegance.com.au	1299
Phil & Teds Smart with Peanut Bassinette	✓		60	4	-/-	-(C)	✓		✓	15	3	8.1	106 x 58 x 93	philandteds.com	399
# Quick Smart Easy Fold			60	4	-/-	2/-				15	2	6.4	104 x 52 x 82	funtastic.com.au	229
Roger Armstrong Elfin 2			65	3	-/-	3/-	✓	Tray	✓	18	ns	9.7	102 x 58 x 104	rogerarmstrong.com.au	199
Valco Baby Ion			65	3	-/-	(C)/-	✓	Bar	✓	18	3.5	8.9	106 x 55 x 108	valco.com.au	450



USING THE TABLE Safety and durability tests A stroller can only pass or fail these tests. **Ease of use score** This is made up of: Various adjustments (safety harness, seat recline and so on): 25%; Loading and unloading the basket, using the swivel wheel lock, applying and releasing the brakes: 25%; Manoeuvring through doors, up and down stairs, turning a tight corner, over rough terrain: 25%; Unfolding, folding and carrying (including fitting into a car boot): 25%. **Features** See What to Look For, page 43. **Price** Recommended retail, as of July 2011. **TABLE NOTES** # Newly tested model. ns Not stated. * Including applied accessories, rounded to the nearest 0.1kg. ** Maximum dimensions when in use, rounded up to the next cm. (A) The tether strap has a loop that could wrap around a child's neck, however, this is unlikely to happen in practice. (B) Passed the standard durability test, but suffered damage when tested at jogging speed. (C) Variable – there are no fixed notches.



What's the juice?

You don't need to spend big bucks to get a good juicer – one of the cheapest models on test comes out equal top, says **Rebecca Gatto**.

NUTSHELL

>> We test a range of centrifugal and cold-press juicers.

>> One of the cheapest models on test, the **Sunbeam Juice Drop JE4800**, tops its more expensive counterparts.

Most juicers aren't cheap. In this test, prices range from \$65 to \$575 for a centrifugal juicer (with only three costing \$100 or less) and from \$250 to \$800 for a non-centrifugal juicer.

CHOICE tested 11 new juicers that use two different types of technology.

- **Centrifugal** are the most popular – they work fast at high speeds, using a rotating blade that cuts the fruit and vegetables and then pushes them against a strainer.
- **Non-centrifugal** juicers can be masticating, cold-press or twin gear. Masticating juicers use a combination of tooth-like blades and a fine sieve and run at a slower rate than most centrifugal

models. Cold-press juicers use a slow-turning auger/gear that squeezes the fruit and veggies. The pulp is pushed through a tight cap and the juice filters through a sieve. Twin-gear juicers extract juice by using two gears that rotate inward to crush and grind.

To gauge performance, our home economist, Fiona Mair, juices carrots, oranges, apples and a combination of watermelon and pineapple. Each is rated according to the amount of juice produced and its quality – a fine, smooth juice with no

pulp or froth is ideal. The slow-juicing action of non-centrifugal models generally produces the best quality juice. If you wish to store your juice, those from non-centrifugal juicers generally keep longer.

The downside of juicers is the cleaning. Most have multiple parts that should be cleaned immediately after use so the juicer doesn't stain or get sticky. The table indicates which models have dishwasher-safe parts. If you're thinking of buying a juicer, remember they're bulky and can take up valuable bench space. ▶

Fresh ideas for juice combos

Experiment with different juice combinations such as pineapple and mint; beetroot, apple or pear and celery; tomato, carrot and celery; and strawberry, apple and pear.

Juice the soft fruit first followed by the hard fruit to maximise extraction. If you're using herbs such as mint, add them in between the fruit and

vegetables to get the most out of them and add grapes or strawberries in handfuls. Bananas can be hard to juice, but try adding them at the start – as the next piece of fruit is added it will help the banana nectar move through the filter.



WHAT TO BUY

CENTRIFUGAL



83%
Breville BJE520,
\$300

Good points

- Good controls.
- Large juice jug and pulp container.
- Froth separator.
- Cord storage.
- Foojie extractor attachment processes soft fruits.
- Cleaning brush included.

Bad points

- Large and bulky and can be difficult to clean in a domestic sink.
- Blade assembly accessible.



Best Buy

83%
Sunbeam Juice Drop
JE4800, \$80

Good points

- Excellent performer for all juicing tests.
- Reasonably large pulp container.
- Easy to clean and store.
- Cord storage.
- Second-least expensive juicer on test.

Bad points

- Some cracks and crevices where dirt can accumulate.
- No juice jug.
- Motor unit is white and can stain easily.
- Narrow chute.



82%
Breville Juice Fountain
BJE200, \$170

Good points

- Very good controls.
- Large juice jug and pulp container.
- Froth separator.
- Cord storage.

Bad points

- Large and bulky and can be difficult to clean in a domestic sink.
- Blade assembly accessible.



82%
Breville Professional 800
Collection BJE820, \$450

Good points

- Good controls with five speeds.
- Large juice jug and pulp container.
- Froth separator.
- Cord storage.
- Overload protection button.
- Purée disc attachment included.

Bad points

- Large and bulky and can be difficult to clean in a domestic sink.
- Blade assembly accessible.



81%
Breville Juice Fountain
Plus BJE410, \$230

Good points

- Good controls with two speeds.
- Large juice jug and pulp container.
- Froth separator.
- Cord storage.

Bad points

- Large and bulky and can be difficult to clean in a domestic sink.
- Blade assembly accessible for smaller hands only.



80%
Breville JE95,
\$230

Good points

- Large juice jug and pulp container.
- Froth separator.
- Cord storage.
- Cleaning brush included.

Bad points

- Large and bulky and can be difficult to clean in a domestic sink.
- Blade assembly accessible for smaller hands only.

COLD PRESS



80%

Sunbeam Café Juice
JE7600, \$219

Good points

- Large juice jug and pulp container.

Bad points

- Large and bulky and can be difficult to clean in a domestic sink.
- Blade assembly accessible.



81%

Greenpower Hippocrates
Plus 1305, \$699

Good points

- Large pulp container and good size jug.
- Other uses include wheat grass, alfalfa juice, fruit sorbet, jam, mincing, soy drink, tofu, makes pasta and noodles.

Bad points

- No cord storage.
- Narrow chute.
- Some cracks and crevices where dirt can accumulate.



80%

Oscar Pro DA-930,
\$795

Good points

- Fewer parts and takes up less bench top space than other cold-press juicers.
- Large juice jug and pulp container.

Bad points

- Narrow chute.
- Very basic instructions.
- No cord storage.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Parts A juicer should have as few parts as possible. They should be easy to fit together and separate without much dexterity required, and easy to clean with very few cracks or crevices.

Light and compact juicers take up little space on your bench top and can be easily stored in a cupboard when not in use.

A large chute so fruit and vegetables don't need to be cut into smaller pieces. A good size is one that accommodates an average-size apple.

The control switch should be positioned for easy access.

The pulp container should be a practical

size to hold a reasonable amount of pulp, without having to remove it half-way through juicing. An external pulp container reduces any build-up of pulp around the sieve.

The juice jug should accommodate a large amount of juice.

The blade assembly shouldn't be easily reached through the chute for safety reasons.

Multiple speeds High speed is good for juicing hard fruit and vegetables, and low speed for softer fruit and vegetables. Cold-press models also have a reverse feature for unclogging the juicer.



ABOUT THE REST

CENTRIFUGAL JUICERS The Philips HR1861 and Sunbeam JE8600 are both very good performers and easy to use. The Magimix Le Duo XL comes with a citrus juicer attachment, so oranges only need to be halved for juicing. However, when turned on, this attachment spins very fast and you'll need to continually turn the juicer off to get the next half of the orange ready. We had problems testing the Sunbeam JE5200 – see page 50 for more.

COLD-PRESS JUICERS Of the newly tested models, the LexSun, Health Start and Lexen all have narrow chutes and no dishwasher-safe parts. Fruit needs to be cut into smaller pieces to fit into the chute and often you'll need to apply pressure to push them through. The controls on the Health Start are unhelpfully positioned at the back of the unit, and the Lexen is the only cold-press juicer on test not to receive an excellent performance result. ▶



Sunbeam's highs and lows

One of the standout performers on test is the **Sunbeam Juice Drop JE4800**. This compact unit produces a large amount of juice and holds a lot of pulp in its container. It's also one of the cheapest models on test. Despite having no dishwasher-safe parts or juice jug and a white exterior that can stain easily, it's the only centrifugal juicer to get an excellent performance result – its juice is up there with the cold-press models.

At the other end, the two models at the bottom of the centrifugal list also come from Sunbeam. The **JE5200** costs \$100 more than the JE4800, yet it's a mediocre

performer, particularly for juicing hard fruit and vegetables. During our apple and carrot juice test the unit began to vibrate and jolt, causing the juice jug to move and leak juice onto the bench. The pulp container also fell off its stand, spraying so much pulp everywhere that Fiona couldn't complete the test. Believing this was a faulty unit, we purchased a new one only to find the same problem occurred again.

Despite being a good performer at a good price, the **JE4700** has a narrow chute and juice can leak into the cracks and crevices, so cleaning is very difficult.

	PERFORMANCE			FEATURES				SPECIFICATIONS					
	Overall score (%)	Performance score (%)	Ease of use score (%)	Pulp container (inside / outside)	Dishwasher safe	No. of speeds	Puree capability Citrus juicer	Chute size *	Weight (kg) **	Juice jug capacity (mL)	Dimensions (cm, H x W x D) ***	Contact	Price (\$)
CENTRIFUGAL													
# Breville BJE520	83	89	76	Out.	✓(C)	5	✓	Ex	5.2	1200	42 x 33 x 19	breville.com.au	300
# Sunbeam Juice Bar JE4800	83	91	74	Out.		1		OK	2.1	na	29 x 23 x 17	sunbeam.com.au	80
Breville Juice Fountain BJE200	82	86	78	In.	✓(C)	1		Ex	3.7	800	41 x 25 x 23	breville.com.au	170
Breville Professional 800 Collection BJE820	82	88	76	Out.	✓(E)	5	✓	Ex	6.6	1200	43 x 21 x 35	breville.com.au	450
Breville Juice Fountain Plus BJE410	81	85	76	Out.	✓(E)	2		Ex	4.3	1000	44 x 20 x 32	breville.com.au	230
# Breville JE95	80	86	74	Out.	✓(C)	2		Ex	4.2	1000	42 x 32 x 21	breville.com.au	230
Sunbeam Café Juice JE7600	80	83	76	Out.	✓(C)	2		Ex	5.3	1000	41 x 32 x 22	sunbeam.com.au	219
# Philips HR1861	79	84	74	Out.	✓(C)	2		Ex	4.0	1250	39 x 31 x 19	philips.com.au	150
# Sunbeam JE8600	78	81	74	Out.	✓(C)	2		Ex	5.4	1000	40 x 42 x 23	sunbeam.com.au	270
Magimix Le Duo Plus XL	73	80	66	In.	✓(F)	1	✓	G	6.9	na	42 x 22 x 22	cambur.com.au	575
Breville Vegetable and Citrus Duo JE3	72	75	68	In.	✓(G)	1	✓	N	2.0	600	30 x 23 x 22	breville.com.au	100
# Magimix Le Duo XL 7MM18011A	71	88	54	In.	✓(F)	1	✓	G	6.9	na	42 x 21 x 21	cambur.com.au	399
# Sunbeam JE5200	70	69	70	Out.		2		Ex	3.3	1000	39 x 29 x 19	sunbeam.com.au	180
Sunbeam Pure Juice JE4700	62	71	52	Out.		1		N	2.2	365	29 x 26 x 17	sunbeam.com.au	65
NON-CENTRIFUGAL													
# Greenpower Hippocrates Plus 1305 (A)	81	94	68	Out.		2 (H)	✓	N	6.5	700	41 x 19 x 41	vitality4life.com.au	699
Oscar Pro DA-930	80	94	66	Out.	ns	2 (H)		N	6.3	1000	44 x 26 x 17	vitality4life.com.au	795
# Healthstart Compact Premier Juicer/Mincer	79	93	64	Out.		2 (H)	✓	N	4.0	1000	38 x 17 x 37	tohealth.com.au	299
# LexSun Multipurpose Juice Extractor DO-9001	79	93	64	Out.	ns	2 (H)	✓	N	5.4	1000	38 x 18 x 39	juicersaustralia.com.au	400
Oscar 900 VitalMAX (Chrome)	78	90	66	Out.		2 (H)		N	6.1	800	22 x 18 x 26	vitality4life.com.au	540
Champion 2000+ (B)	74	85	62	na	1	✓		N	9.7	na	30 x 20 x 49	vitality4life.com.au	580
# Lexen Live Enzyme 6-in-1 Juicer GP62	71	78	64	Out.		2 (H)	✓	N	7.5	700	40 x 17 x 39	juicersaustralia.com.au	249

USING THE TABLE Scores The overall score is made up of: Performance: 50%; Ease of use: 50%. **Price** Recommended retail, as of June 2011. **TABLE NOTES** na Not applicable. ns Not stated. # Newly tested model. * Chute sizes are rated Excellent (Ex), Good (G), OK or Narrow (N). ** Includes cord but doesn't include juice jug. *** For centrifugal juicers, the measurements are taken with the controls facing towards the user without the juice jug. For cold-press juicers, the depth is measured to the front of the auger without the juice jug. The height is measured with the plunger in place. (A) Twin-gear juicer. (B) Masticating juicer. (C) All relevant parts are dishwasher-safe, top shelf only. (D) All parts except the puree insert. (E) All parts except the juice cover. (F) All parts but select the minimum temperature and avoid the drying cycle. (G) Filter basket is not dishwasher-safe. (H) On/reverse only.



Nutshell

- We find a star performer that's just as good as its mid-priced and high-end siblings.
- Don't get sucked in by cheapies – the \$49 vac on test is a very poor performer.

Not all vacs suck

Martha Psiroukis finds a star vacuum for picking up dirt, and one that just sucks – not in the good way.

CHOICE testing has found that mid-priced vacs usually provide the best value for money. But this test of low-cost vacuums has also uncovered a very good performer at a reasonable price. The **Miele S2111** picks up 76% of dirt from carpet, practically the same as the top two mid-priced performers (see *CHOICE*, May 2011, page 55) – both also Miele's – and only 2% less than its

expensive sibling, and the top overall performer in the high-end range (a Bosch – see *CHOICE*, February 2011, page 50).

Although we divide vac testing into three categories for fair comparison, we occasionally see overlaps. In this test, our top three performers (see the table, page 52) could also fit into the mid-priced vacuums table. So it's worth looking at our mid-priced vac test before choosing a model.

Such a thing as too cheap

The least expensive vacuum on test, the Abode STX006E-140 (\$49), picked up only 12% of dirt from carpet – an abysmal result. It also scored poorly for sucking up pet hair and cleaning edges and corners, and is one of the loudest models on test. The most expensive model, the Nilfisk Meteor 12404911 (\$329), removed a poor 29% of dirt from carpet. ▶

The top-performing low-cost vacuum cleaner on test, the Miele S2111, picks up practically the same amount of dirt from carpet as the top two mid-priced models from our May 2011 test.

WHAT TO BUY

80%

**Miele S2111,
\$299**

Good points

- Best on test for picking up dirt from carpet.
- Excellent at removing pet hair.
- Very good at cleaning corners and along edges.
- Good range of tools with on-board storage for all of them.
- Variable power.
- Very good, long wand.
- Excellent bag; easy to remove/replace.

Bad points

- No telescopic wand.

NOTE: A vac must score at least 70% for dirt removal from carpet to make our What to Buy list, which is why the Electrolux Supercyclone ZSC6930 is not included.

ABOUT THE REST

About half of the other vacs on test are let down by dirt pick-up from carpet. Although we no longer test dirt pick-up from hard floors, past testing found that most vacs score well for this. All get 100% for

our hard floor scratch test, so some further down the table, such as the **Piranha Phantom 2400W** (\$99) and **Volta Contour U4210F** (\$100) are worth considering if you only have hard floors.

WHAT'S YOUR BAG?

You may be tempted to use a generic dust bag, but think twice as the brand name bags make up part of the vacuum's filtration system. You may also void your warranty if you don't use the recommended dust bags.



To find out how we test vacuum cleaners, go to choice.com.au/lowcostvac

PERFORMANCE				
	Type	Overall score (%)	Dirt removal from carpet score (%)	Ease of use score (%)
Miele S2111	Barrel	80	76	80
Electrolux Supercyclone ZSC6930	Barrel	76	68	78
Vax PowerPlus 3 Pet VPP1600P	Barrel	74	55	78
Nilfisk Action Plus 44000171	Barrel	72	61	82
Volta Ultima U5011F	Barrel	72	54	78
Hoover Freespace Evo TFV2015	Barrel	70	52	78
Piranha Phantom 2400W	Barrel	70	54	74
Volta Contour U4210F	Barrel	70	56	84
Kambrook Captiv G3 Pet KBV480	Barrel	66	41	76
Vax Power 5 Pet VPUP2000P	Upright	63	50	60
Nilfisk Meteor 12404911	Barrel	62	29	78
Hoover Super Hero HB2030B	Barrel	60	47	81
Homemaker VC45J-8AB	Barrel	56	38	66
Russell Hobbs HEPA Cyclonic RHF202P (A)	Barrel	54	41	75
Electrolux Energica ZS204A	Upright	50	48	58
Abode STX006E-140 (Big W)	Barrel	33	12	76

USING THE TABLE Scores The overall score is made up of: Dirt removal from carpet: 40%; Ease of use: 30%; Cleaning corners and edges: 15%; Pet hair removal: 15%. All models score 100% in the scratch test. **Noise** For comparison, a typical conversation is carried out at about 60dB, while city traffic is measured at about 80dB.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Light, quiet and easy to manoeuvre

Try a vac in the shop to see if it's all these things over both carpet and hard surfaces. A long cord so you're not changing power points between rooms and a neat compact design for easy storage are also desirable.

A **turbo head** has a rotating brush driven by airflow, while a **power head** uses an inbuilt motor. Our testing has found the power head is generally more effective, though they tend to be bulkier than standard ones.

Adjustable head height allows you to adjust the height of the bristles on the cleaning head to the length of the carpet pile or for when you're vacuuming hard surfaces.

Tools The standard tools to check for are dusting, crevice and upholstery brushes. On-board storage makes using these convenient.

Variable power/suction allows you to lower the suction for delicate jobs, such as cleaning curtains.

A **telescopic wand** lets you adjust the wand to suit your height so you don't have to bend down too much.

HEPA filter This stands for high-efficiency particulate air filter – an international standard for filters that trap particles, which can help if you have asthma or a dust allergy or sensitivity.

Dust collector Bags are better for minimising dust particles getting

One advantage of a bin over a bag is that it has no ongoing costs, though they can be messy to empty

into the air, and bags that close mean you're spared breathing in dust when changing the bag. One advantage of a bin over a bag is that it has no ongoing costs, though they can be messy to empty.

FEATURES

SPECIFICATIONS

Noise (dBA)	Carpet-hard floor head / power head / turbo brush	Crevice tool / upholstery tool / dusting brush	On-board storage	Variable suction control	Variable power	HEPA filter	Power (measured) (W)	Dust collector	Reach from power point (m)	Weight (kg)	Measured dust collector volume (L)	Cost per bag (\$)*	Contact	Annual running cost (\$)	Price (\$)
70	✓/✓/✓	✓/✓/✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	(D) 1460	Bag	8.4	5.8	2.8	4.99	miele.com.au	15.20	299
76	✓/✓/✓	✓/✓/✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	1780	Bin	8.8	7.2	1.6	na	electrolux.com.au	18.50	300
72	✓/✓/✓	✓/✓/✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	1460	Bin	11.2	8.9	1.3	na	vax.com.au	15.20	299
70	✓/✓/✓	✓/✓/✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	1660	Bag	10.3	7.9	1.5	3.19	nilfisk-advance.com.au	17.30	209
71	✓/✓/✓	✓/✓/✓	✓ (B)	✓	✓	✓	1730	Bag	9.7	7.3	3.2	2.99	volta.com.au	18.00	220
72	✓/✓/✓	✓/✓/✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	1670	Bag	8.2	5.7	1.9	2.99	hooverfloorcare.com.au	17.40	199
72	✓/✓/✓	✓/✓/✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	1600	Bin	8.0	7.2	2.0	na	kmart.com.au	16.60	99
74	✓/✓/✓	✓/✓/✓	✓ (C)	✓	✓	✓	1400	Bag	7.8	5.2	1.1	2.29	volta.com.au	14.60	100
74	✓/✓/✓	✓/✓/✓	✓ (C)	✓	✓	✓	1720	Bin	8.0	6.3	0.6	na	kambrook.com.au	17.90	150
82	✓/✓/✓	✓/✓/✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	1660	Bin	6.3	8.0	1.6	na	vax.com.au	17.30	249
73	✓/✓/✓	✓/✓/✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	1620	Bin	9.0	7.4	2.0	na	nilfisk-advance.com.au	16.80	329
72	✓/✓/✓	✓/✓/✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	1490	Bag	7.4	5.7	2.6	2.99	hooverfloorcare.com.au	15.50	109
70	✓/✓/✓	✓/✓/✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	1570	Bin	7.8	7.5	1.7	na	kmart.com.au	16.30	99
82	✓/✓/✓	✓/✓/✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	1420	Bin	8.0	5.8	1.0	na	salton.com.au	14.80	199
71	✓/✓/✓	✓/✓/✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	1260	Bin	8.3	4.0	1.1	na	electrolux.com.au	13.10	300
79	✓/✓/✓	✓/✓/✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	1040	Bin	7.3	4.4	1.6	na	bigw.com.au	10.80	49

Figures See What to Look For, above. **Annual running costs** are based on one hour's use per week at 20c/kWh. **Price** Recommended retail, as of June 2011. **TABLE NOTES** * Approximate. Usually available in sets of four or five and often includes filters. **na** Not applicable. **(A)** Discontinued, but may still be available in some stores. **(B)** For two tools only. **(C)** For one tool only. **(D)** Available as an optional extra. Active HEPA (SF-AH50), \$39.50.

Weighing in

Judging a full load is less of a chore with a new but rare in-built feature, says **Matthew Steen**.

When we last tested washers (see *CHOICE*, April 2011), we lamented that most models don't have a feature that shows you how full the machine is when you load it. Since people regularly under-fill their washer, it's a good idea to know when enough is enough – you'd be surprised how much can fit in. Of the newly tested models here, the Bosch WAS32742AU has this feature, and although it's not entirely accurate, it at least gives some indication as to how full your machine is. We look forward to seeing this feature become standard – and more accurate.

Lock and (re)load

CHOICE tested partial loads again to see whether our results were consistent with our April findings (see above). We're happy to report they were. If you're

Nutshell

- *CHOICE tests eight new machines, none of which make our What to Buy recommendations.*
- *Once again we find front loaders remove dirt better when using a partial load.*

washing a 3.5kg load – a rough average of what people wash regardless of claimed capacity – our tests indicate increased dirt removal for front loaders and better rinse scores across all machines. There are marginal falls for most in gentleness and for all in spin scores.

Our tests show most washers use less water on a part-load wash. This is because we use auto water level sensing if available, resulting in water savings of 8%–28% compared with a full load. Only the Simpson SWT554 doesn't have auto water level sensing among the newly tested models, so we put it to the highest level, since our internal testing has found this is close to what people consider a full load. We recommend buying a machine with auto water level sensing (see our table, page 56), as it's likely to save you water in the long run. ▶

RAISING STANDARDS

CHOICE had the opportunity to talk to Standards Australia and the Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency about some issues we raised in our last washer article (see *CHOICE* April 2011, page 40). Many of our findings are in the process of being researched by the committee responsible, and there are some expectations around time frames. *CHOICE* continues to be frustrated at the speed at which change occurs, but given the committee's aim to

allow input from a wide range of stakeholders, including manufacturers, government and the public, we know it's not a rapid process.

The role of Standards Australia is that of a neutral entity that guides the committee process, brings together the standard committees and administers their work. *CHOICE* will continue to comment and participate in standards committees to ensure that they reflect the way that consumers use their products.

WHAT TO BUY

For profiles of the models listed here, see the relevant *CHOICE* issue as indicated next to each model or log

MEDIUM (6KG-7KG)

77%

Asko Quattro 2000rpm
W6903 (fr) (Apr 11), \$2399



74%

Electrolux Time Manager
EWf1074 (fr) (Aug 09), \$899



73%

Miele W1611 (fr)
(Mar 10), \$1699



**Best
Buy**

LARGE (7.5KG OR LARGER)

74%

Bosh Logixx 8 WAS28440AU
(fr) (Mar 09), \$2149



How we test & reliability

See *CHOICE*, August 2009, page 44, or choice.com.au/washers to see how we test washing machines, and *CHOICE*, March 2011, page 14 for results of our latest reliability survey, or go to choice.com.au/appliance-reliability

WHAT TO LOOK FOR



Woolens cycle (machine/hand-washable) programs relate to instructions on the garment, advising whether it's machine washable or for hand wash only. Washers with a tick for hand wash claim this program is gentle enough for hand-wash only items.



Selectable spin speed allows you to change the spin speed on some programs. A higher spin speed will result in drier clothes (good when using a dryer), while a lower speed is for delicates or fabrics that crease easily.

Out-of-balance correction automatically

detects and redistributes an out-of-balance load, either by spinning slowly before the full spin cycle or taking in more water (which is what most top loaders do). If you're concerned about high water use, buy either a machine without this feature or a front loader, which is also less likely to go out of balance than a top loader.



Auto water level sensing automatically adjusts the water level according to the load and/or fabric type. Some machines also adjust the washing action.

Tap connection If you only have a cold water tap in your laundry, choosing a

front loader means you can still wash in warm or hot water when needed, as the machine will heat the water itself. To take advantage of less-expensive hot water systems, such as solar, look for a hot and cold water connection machine – be aware that most front loaders with hot and cold connection only draw hot water when the wash temperature is set to 60°C. See *CHOICE*, March 2010, page 60, for more on this.



Extra rinse can be useful for people sensitive to detergents, as it adds an extra rinse stage to the washing program.



		PERFORMANCE										FEATURES										
Type		Overall score (%)	Dirt removal score (%)		Rinse performance score (%)		Gentleness score (%)		Water efficiency score (%)		Spin efficiency score (%)		Water used (L, normal cycle)		Cycle time (min, normal wash)		Noise (dB)	Woolens cycle (machine / hand washable)	Out-of-balance correction	Selectable spin speed	Auto water level sensing	
UP TO 5.5KG																						
# Simpson SWT 554	Top / agitator	68	73	76	47	70	58	83	63	60	✓/—											
LG Fuzzy Logic WF-T556	Top / impeller	67	68	83	66	57	48	118	58	54	✓/—		✓	✓						✓	✓	
# LG WT-H550	Top / impeller	67	66	86	62	57	52	118	58	51	✓/—		✓							✓	✓	
Samsung SW50USP	Top / impeller	66	66	94	68	40	47	151	57	62	—/—									✓	✓	
LG WF-T507	Top / impeller	64	67	82	59	47	47	134	63	54	✓/—		✓							✓	✓	
6KG-7KG																						
Asko Quattro 2000rpm W6903	Front	77	76	89	73	68	80	96	148	62	✓/✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Asko Eco Quattro 1800rpm W6883 (A)	Front	76	71	88	76	70	83	91	152	70	✓/✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Asko Quattro 1400rpm W6443 (A)	Front	75	72	89	75	67	75	99	114	70	✓/✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Electrolux Time Manager EWF1074	Front	74 (E)	75	79	76	80	68	69	126	60	—/—	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Miele W1611	Front	73 (E)	77	66	75	84	73	53	112	62	✓/✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
# Fisher & Paykel WH60F60WV1	Front	72	71	63	72	82	75	55	114	62	✓/✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Fisher & Paykel AquaSmart WL70T60C (B)	Top / impeller	71	80	58	57	81	67	66	58	57	✓/—	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
# Hoover VHD8144D	Front	71	67	63	75	83	77	58	104	69	✓/—	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Fisher & Paykel WH70F60W3	Front	68	65	49	77	85	75	53	113	62	✓/✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Ariston ARF105	Front	65	69	36	75	84	61	58	136	64	✓/—	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
LG Inverter DirectDrive WD11020D	Front	57	53	13	78	90	75	35	132	63	✓/—	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
7.5KG AND LARGER																						
Fisher & Paykel AquaSmart WL80T65CW1 (B)	Top / impeller	75	81	74	58	81	74	76	58	63	✓/—	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Bosch Logixx 8 WAS28440AU (C)	Front	74	67	83	76	78	75	87	73	65	✓/✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
# Miele W5903	Front	73 (E)	78	61	72	86	81	53	143	59	✓/✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Fisher & Paykel WH80F60W2	Front	72	71	63	76	83	73	68	111	62	✓/✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
LG Direct Drive WD12020D	Front	72	74	49	74	87	81	50	141	67	✓/—	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
# Miele W5741	Front	72	77	54	70	85	76	55	143	61	✓/✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Siemens WM14S440AU	Front	71	61	79	76	80	75	81	75	60	✓/✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
V-Zug Adora SLQ	Front	71	59	74	79	81	82	77	84	58	✓/✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
# Bosch WAS32742AU	Front	70	68	58	75	82	76	73	127	59	✓/✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Samsung WF8750LSW	Front	70	73	50	73	83	70	64	123	59	✓/—	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Whirlpool 6ALSQ8000MW3 (D)	Top / agitator	70 (E)	78	86	55	58	53	157	47	62	✓/—	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Whirlpool WFE1485BD	Front	70	65	68	72	79	78	89	127	68	✓/—	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
LG Turbodrum DD WT-R107	Top / impeller	69	70	84	57	65	62	174	66	55	✓/—	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
# Samsung WF0754W7V	Front	69	66	60	73	82	77	68	108	59	✓/—	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
LG WT-H755	Top / impeller	67	62	84	66	62	57	143	57	54	✓/—	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Samsung WF8802RPF	Front	67	64	55	71	83	71	67	124	64	✓/—	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Haier HWMP95TL	Top / impeller	66	72	66	53	73	54	127	84	54	—/—											

SPECIFICATIONS

COSTS

	Colest wash temperature for normal wash (°C)*	Capacity (kg)	Claimed dimensions (cm, H x W x D)	Contact	Running costs (\$/10 years)	Price (\$)
	Cold	5.5	103 x 58 x 63	simpson.com.au	599	689
	Cold	5.5	91 x 54 x 54	lge.com.au	725	599
	Cold	5.5	94 x 54 x 54	lge.com.au	717	749
C	Cold	5	86 x 54 x 56	samsung.com.au	900	549
	Cold	5	85 x 54 x 54	lge.com.au	840	549
y	Cold	6	85 x 60 x 59	asko.com.au	694	2399
C	Cold	6	85 x 60 x 59	asko.com.au	656	2099
y	Cold	6	85 x 60 x 59	asko.com.au	700	1599
	30	7	85 x 60 x 63	electrolux.com.au	660	899
	30	6.5	85 x 60 x 63	miele.com.au	518	1699
y	Cold	6	84 x 60 x 50	fp.com.au	511	799
	Cold	7	102 x 60 x 60	fp.com.au	485	1079
y	Cold	7	85 x 60 x 52	andico.com.au	528	799
y	Cold	7	84 x 60 x 54	fp.com.au	469	909
y	Cold	7	85 x 60 x 53	aristonbrand.com	532	799
	Cold	7	85 x 60 x 55	lge.com.au	293	899
C	Cold	8	105 x 65 x 65	fp.com.au	536	1189
y	Cold	8	84 x 60 x 59	boschappliances.com.au	623	2149
	30	7.5	85 x 60 x 62	miele.com.au	564	2399
y	Cold	8	84 x 60 x 59	fp.com.au	544	1059
C	Cold	7.5	85 x 60 x 55	lge.com.au	421	999
y	Cold	7.5	85 x 60 x 62	miele.com.au	464	2199
y	Cold	8	85 x 60 x 59	siemens.com.au	576	2149
y	Cold	8	85 x 60 x 60	vzug.com.au	571	4290
y	Cold	8	85 x 60 x 59	boschappliances.com.au	526	2599
y	Cold	7.5	85 x 60 x 60	samsung.com.au	511	899
C	Cold (F)	7.5	109 x 69 x 68	whirlpool.com.au	1542	1099
y	Cold	8.5	85 x 60 x 60	whirlpool.com.au	679	1199
C	Cold	10	110 x 69 x 72	lge.com.au	1067	1299
y	Cold	7.5	84 x 60 x 60	samsung.com.au	474	1199
C	Cold	7.5	100 x 62 x 64	lge.com.au	852	1029
y	Cold	8	85 x 60 x 60	samsung.com.au	523	1299
C	Cold	9.5	111 x 69 x 69	haierlife.com.au	925	899

ACCESSIBILITY

CHOICE assessed the suitability of the newly tested washing machines for people with disabilities using Independent Living Centre guidelines.

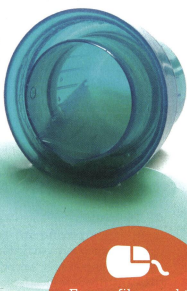
For wheelchair users or people with back pain

Any front loader off the floor is easiest to use. All front loaders on test are relatively easy to open and reach into.

For people with upper limb dysfunction or weakness The Samsung WF0754W7V is recommended.

For those with vision impairment The LG WT-H550 and Simpson SWT 554 washers are recommended.

For those with cognitive impairment The Simpson SWT 554 is the simplest to operate.



For profiles, and to compare all washing machines on test, log on to choice.com.au/washers

USING THE TABLE Scores The overall score is made up of:

Dirt removal: 40%; Rinse performance: 20%; Gentleness: 15%; Water efficiency: 15%; Spin efficiency: 10%. **Cold wash penalty** As the majority of Australians now wash in cold water straight from the tap, we have applied a small penalty in our overall score to models that cannot do a proper cold wash (at about 20°C) on the normal cycle. While the higher wash temperature may slightly increase a machine's scores for dirt removal and rinse effectiveness, it also means it's using more energy than it would if it were able to do a true cold wash; our penalty compensates for this. **Dirt removal** More accurate than the human eye, a spectrophotometer is used to measure this – differences of about 6% are visible.

Features See What to Look For, page 55, for details. **Tap connection** Some machines need both hot and cold water to operate. Others connect to cold water only and may need a special connector or sealing cap for the hot water inlet. A machine with a heater (front loaders only) can be particularly useful if you connect to cold only, as it still gives you the option of a warm or hot wash. But a dual connection front loader connected to solar hot water can be more efficient when doing warm or hot washes. **Dimensions** are for the smallest box that fits around the machine, as stated by the manufacturer. **Running costs** This is an estimate of how much it will cost for water and electricity over 10 years if you wash the equivalent of one load every day using a normal cycle, based on 20c/kWh of electricity and \$1.50 per 1000L for water. It also includes electricity used when the machine is connected to a power source but not in use. It does not include detergent.

Price Recommended or average retail, as of June 2011. **TABLE NOTES** # Newly tested model.

* Cold = cold tap water (20°C). (A) Discontinued, but may still be available in stores. (B) We have received feedback about the Fisher & Paykel AquaSmart models leaving detergent residue and lint on clothes, particularly in hard water areas. Our rise test only measures the soluble component of detergent left in the clothes, so we don't see this. For more details, see our research detailed in CHOICE, September 2008, page 42. (C) The manufacturer recommends using the intensive button for a full load. Using this option will most likely improve the dirt removal and overall score, but also increase time. (D) The Whirlpool 6ALS7244MMV3 (1049) is a similar model and scores the same as the 6ALS0800MMV3, but does not have an extra rinse cycle. (E) Penalty applied because the machine cannot do a cold wash – see Cold Wash Penalty, above. (F) Even though this machine has a "cold" wash, this cycle uses hot water and reaches a temperature of 24°C.



Nutshell

- Six new dishwashers on test, none of which makes our What to Buy list.
- Most of the dishwashers in our table are good overall, and some barely use a sink full of water.

Plating up

Dishwashers are getting smarter, but they're also getting more confusing, says **Matthew Steen**.

Capitalising on a chore that few people enjoy, dishwasher manufacturers are developing features to make their product stand out from the pack. From barely using a sink full of water to technology that captures water in minerals, an incorporated heat exchange or storing water from your last wash to use for your next first rinse – all these innovations save you energy and/or water in the long run. We've also seen new-fangled designs that pop open doors automatically and racks that seem infinitely adjustable.

Saving water and energy is increasingly important. However, it's a good idea to check these machines' wash performance, as some may sacrifice one

for the other. CHOICE recommends looking at the performance results first, features second.

All six newly tested dishwashers here are good or OK for wash performance. Check out the table, page 60, for details.

Daily, eco, normal, everyday?

Choosing a dishwasher program to test is more complicated than it seems. CHOICE doesn't want to disadvantage any model, so we try to look at all the programs on offer and select based on strict criteria. We believe most people will choose the auto program if it's available, because the machine should be able to tell how full and dirty the load is.

If there's no auto program, most people will choose something along the lines of a normal wash. This is where

manufacturers' wording can sometimes cause confusion. A "daily" wash implies something you'd use every day, as do "regular" and "everyday". But sometimes the results from these wash programs are different, as a manufacturer may not believe a daily wash means a full load, whereas consumers might be loading it up to the brim.

We'd like to see the auto program feature become universal to clear up any confusion. It could also be used for energy and water labelling, providing transparency for manufacturers and consumers. ▶

Reliability

See CHOICE, May 2010, page 16, for results of our latest reliability survey, or go to choice.com.au/appliancereliability

Dishwashers sold

355,000

Brands

39

Total sales

\$317m

Average price

\$890

(Australia, Feb 2010 – Feb 2011)

WHAT TO BUY

STANDARD

**81%****Siemens SN56M532AU/08, \$1849**

This semi-integrated, top-performing dishwasher has the highest overall score and is an excellent water-efficient product. It is one of the lowest users of water for a full-sized model, is energy-efficient and washes and dries well. Features include a child lock on the controls, delay start and time-to-go display, as well as an easy-to-lift top basket that can be adjusted when loaded.

COMPACT

**75%****Bosch SKE53M05AU, \$1199**

This built-in six-place-setting model is very energy-efficient and very good at drying. It scores well for washing, but is only OK for water efficiency, and has a long run time. Features include a child lock on the controls, time-to-go display and delay start, and its cutlery basket can be placed anywhere.

**Best Buy****78%****Asko D5131, \$1149**

This built-in model has fan-assisted drying, scores well for water efficiency and washing, and is also relatively inexpensive. But it's only OK for energy efficiency, has a long run time and is relatively noisy. Features include a child lock on the door, cutlery basket that can be placed anywhere in the front of the bottom rack, time-to-go display and delay start.

SLIMLINE

**74%****AEG Electrolux Favorit F65411VI, \$1639**

This nine-place-setting slimline model is excellent at drying and also scores well for washing. However, it's only OK for energy and water efficiency. Features include a top basket that can be adjusted when fully loaded, time-to-go display and delay start.

**Green Buy****77%****Bosch Classic Electronic SMS50E12AU/07, \$1249**

This freestanding model has excellent water efficiency, is very energy-efficient and is good for washing. It's relatively quiet, very cheap to run, and has a child lock on the door. But it's only OK for drying and has a long program time. The technically similar **Bosch Classic SMU50E15AU** (\$1249) is available for the same price, but it's stainless steel and needs to be built in.

Accessibility

Using Independent Living Centre guidelines, our testers assess dishwashers for people with disabilities. These are the best options from this test:

- **For wheelchair users** Any of the single drawer or compact types installed at a suitable height.
- **For people with upper limb dysfunction** The Fisher & Paykel DD90SDFTX1 has the easiest to use controls and door.
- **For people with vision impairment** The Westinghouse WSU6603XR has a built-in light and good visual and audio cues for controls.
- **For people with a cognitive disability** The Samsung DMS500TRW is the best of the bunch, but none are great. For more, see choice.com.au/access.



PERFORMANCE

		Overall score (%)	Washing performance score (%)	Water efficiency score (%)	Drying performance score (%)	Energy efficiency score (%)	Water used (L)	Energy used (kWh)	Noise (dB)	Cycle time (mins)	Auto program / dirt sensor	Easy-to-lift, height-adjustable top basket	Fold-down / removable plate racks	Anti-flood hose	Half-load option	Eco wash
STANDARD	Siemens SN56M532AU/08	81	79	93	77	77	12	1.07	40	127	✓	✓	F	✓	✓	
	Asko D5131	78	77	76	99	60	20	1.65	53	156				✓		✓
	Bosch SMS50E12AU/07 (A)	77	75	92	59	89	12	0.66	41	151			F	✓	✓	
	Dishlex DX301WK	77	80	67	92	62	21	1.57	48	114	✓	✓	F			✓
	LG LD-1419W2	77	76	71	95	66	23	1.45	42	173	✓	✓	F	✓	✓	✓
	Bosch SMS63M08AU (B)	76	67	92	93	76	12	1.1	37	125	✓	✓	F	✓	✓	
	Bosch SMS65M08AU/25	76	69	95	85	75	11	1.13	48	142	✓	✓	F	✓	✓	
	Dishlex DX103WK	76	78	67	95	57	21	1.73	48	113				✓		✓
	Dishlex DX203WK	76	74	76	91	66	17	1.44	50	100						✓
	# Miele G 5100i	76	78	68	90	61	24	1.61	44	150	✓	✓		✓		✓
	Miele G 5300 SC	76	71	87	97	63	15	1.53	37	141	✓	✓	F	✓	✓	✓
	Miele G 5775 SCVi XXL	76	68	90	99	68	14	1.38	45	146	✓	✓	F	✓	✓	✓
	Miele G1022i	75	74	72	91	63	19	1.53	42	139	✓	✓	F, R	✓		
	Miele G 5500 SC	75	69	87	95	64	15	1.50	49	131	✓	✓	F	✓		✓
	Smeg STH903	75	69	87	87	72	13	1.22	52	110	na	F	✓	✓	✓	
	# Westinghouse WSF6602WR	75	74	78	91	61	18	1.61	45	115	✓					✓
	Asko D5233	74	70	82	91	64	17	1.49	50	176	✓		F	✓		
	Bosch SMU68M05AU/01 (C)	74	64	94	88	75	12	1.12	38	133	✓	✓	F	✓	✓	
	V-Zug Adora 60SL	74	73	66	91	67	21	1.39	50	105	✓	✓	F	✓	✓	✓
	# Westinghouse WVSU6603XR	74	72	80	88	60	17	1.64	43	146	✓	✓		✓		✓
	Ariston LFF 825 X	73	68	86	90	61	15	1.60	48	129	✓		F	✓	✓	✓
	Bosch SMS50E22AU/07	73	69	92	54	90	12	0.63	45	152	✓	✓	F	✓	✓	
	# LG LD-1421T2	73	71	68	94	64	24	1.52	43	175	✓	✓	F	✓	✓	✓
	Ariston LBF51	72	70	83	84	58	16	1.69	49	138	✓					✓
	Fisher & Paykel DD60DCW6	72	64	81	94	72	15	1.22	49	113	na (D)	F		✓		
	Fisher & Paykel DW60DOX1	72	69	86	78	64	15	1.49	36	147	✓	✓	F	✓		✓ (E)
	Indesit DFG261S	72	66	84	89	65	16	1.47	44	133	✓			✓	✓	
	LG LD-1420T2	72	65	82	91	70	17	1.31	41	183	✓		F	✓	✓	✓
	Siemens SN45E502AU	72	68	92	51	90	12	0.64	45	152	✓	✓	F	✓		
	Asko D5893 XXL	71	61	86	96	65	15	1.47	44	196	✓			✓	✓	
	DeLonghi DEDW60S	71	64	88	70	81	12	0.94	48	133	✓		F	✓	✓	
	Baumatic BAD6002	70	61	79	78	83	16	0.88	53	135	✓	✓	F	✓	✓	
	Miele G 1023	70	67	72	81	65	19	1.48	43	134	✓	✓	F	✓		
	Asko D5233 XXL	69	64	80	80	65	18	1.46	50	168	✓		F	✓	✓	
	# Samsung DMS500TRW	63	58	89	26	89	13	0.66	48	140	✓		F	✓	✓	
SLIMLINE / COMPACT	Bosch SKE53M05 AU	75	70	68	89	86	10	0.77	45	166	✓	na	F	✓		
	AEG Electrolux F65411VI	74	76	57	94	62	19	1.56	51	114	✓	✓	F	✓		✓
	Fisher & Paykel DD60SDFTX6	73	63	78	90	89	8	0.66	44	115	na (D)	F, R				✓
	Fisher & Paykel DD60SCW6	72	64	79	94	72	8	0.61	49	113	na (D)	F			✓	✓
	Omega DW101WA	70	69	76	42	94	9	0.49	46	109	na (D)					
	Technika TDX4SS	69	59	79	83	88	11	0.70	52	99	✓				✓	
	# Fisher & Paykel DD90SDFTX1	67	58	82	85	83	11	0.88	48	115	na (D)	F				✓

SPECIFICATIONS						COSTS	
Water connection	Place settings	Type*	Colour*	Contact		Running cost (\$/10 years)	Price (\$)*
0x55	Hor C	14	SI	SS	siemens.com.au	845	1849
0x56	Crec	14	BI	W	asko.com.au	1314	1149
0x57	Crec	14	FW	W	bosch.com.au	548	1249
0x60	Crec	12	FW	W	dishlex.com.au	1261	1009
0x60	Hor C	14	FW	W	lge.com.au	1181	899
0x60	Only	14	FW	SS	bosch.com.au	869	1749
0x60	Only	14	FW	SS	bosch.com.au	882	1849
0x61	Hor C	12	FW	W	dishlex.com.au	1376	739
0x58	Crec	12	FW	W	dishlex.com.au	1146	849
0x57	Crec	14	SI	SS	miele.com.au	1307	1799
0x60	Hor C	14	FW	W	miele.com.au	1198	1899
0x57	Hor C	15	FI	FI	miele.com.au	1082	2599
0x57	Hor C	12	SI	SS	miele.com.au	1219	1399
0x57	Hor C	14	BI	W	miele.com.au	1174	1999
0x55	Only	12	FI	FI	smeg.com.au	955	2690
0x62	Only	13	FW	W	westinghouse.com.au	1271	949
0x55	Crec	14	SI	W	asko.com.au	1181	1549
0x57	Crec	15	SI	SS	bosch.com.au	883	1899
0x57	Hor C	12	SI	SS	vzug.com	1130	2990
0x58	Only	13	BI	SS	westinghouse.com.au	1286	1219
0x60	Hor C	14	FW	SS	aristonbrand.com	1298	1499
0x57	Crec	14	FW	W	bosch.com.au	526	1399
1x60	Hor C	14	FW	SS	lge.com.au	1238	1349
0x60	Hor C	14	FW	W	aristonbrand.com	1321	699
0x58	Crec	12	BI	W	fp.com.au	973	1479
0x60	Crec	14	FW	SS	fp.com.au	1172	1099
0x60	Hor C	14	FW	SS	arist.com.au	1199	799
0x60	Hor C	14	FW	SS	lge.com.au	1049	1549
0x57	Crec	14	BI	SS	siemens.com	533	1649
0x56	Hor C	14	FI	FI	asko.com.au	1163	2549
0x58	Hor C	12	FW	SS	delonghi.com.au	752	999
0x60	Only	12	FW	W	baumatic.com.au	730	1289
0x60	Hor C	12	FW	W	miele.com.au	1182	1199
0x55	Hor C	14	BI(F)	SS	asko.com.au	1164	1749
1x61	Crec	13	FW	W	samsung.com.au	552	899
0x50	Hor C	6	BI	SS	bosch.com.au	620	1199
0x55	Crec	9	FI	FI	aeg-electrolux.com.au	1243	1639
0x57	Hor C	6	BI	SS	fp.com.au	544	1159
0x57	Crec	6	BI	W	fp.com.au	973	849
0x50	Hor C	6	FW	W	omegaappliances.com.au	436	499
0x58	Hor C	8	FW	SS	technika.com.au	571	699
0x58	Crec	9	SI	SS	fp.com.au	701	1469

USING THE TABLE

Scores The overall score is made up of: Washing performance: 55%; Water efficiency: 15%; Drying performance: 15%; Energy efficiency: 15%.

Noise is measured 1m away and 1m up from the dishwasher, which is placed within cabinetry. The noise level varies depending on kitchen layout, but our reading gives a comparative measure. A difference of 3dB is noticeable to the human ear.

Water connection

H or C You can connect the dishwasher to hot or cold water. Connecting to hot water is likely to shorten the cycle time, but you may lose program versatility. You may need a tempering valve to connect to solar hot water, as the inlet temperature generally should not exceed 60°C.

Crec The manufacturer recommends connecting to a cold tap, and the dishwasher heats the water itself (all dishwashers have a heater).

Only You can only connect the dishwasher to a cold tap.

Type

FW Freestanding, with a worktop (can generally be built-in as well).

BI Built-in – might not have top or side panels; must be enclosed and anchored to prevent it from tipping forward when fully loaded and dish racks are pulled out.

SI Semi-integrated – a built-in type for which you can fit a panel to the door under the control fascia to match the rest of your kitchen cupboard doors.

FI Fully integrated – built-in, with the whole front matching your kitchen and the controls inside the door.

Running costs This is an estimate of how much

the dishwasher will cost over 10 years for water and electricity if you wash a full load every day using a normal or auto-sensing cycle, based on 20c/kWh for electricity and \$1.50/100L water. The largest running cost will be the cost of detergent, which can vary significantly, so it's not factored into these calculations.

Price Recommended retail, as of July 2011.

TABLE NOTES

* Newly tested model.

* Where possible, we've listed the white model code and price. Most models are available in other colours, finishes or types – usually at a higher price. Where the model numbers are different, we've listed them below. The colour given for SI models is for the control panel.

SS Indicates any metallic or metallic-look finish; not all models are actually stainless steel.

na Not applicable – only has one drawer or basket, or in the case of the Fisher & Paykel Double DishDrawer D606DCW6, two separate drawers.

(A) The Bosch SMS50E15AU (\$1249) is technically similar and should perform the same on the test program.

(B) The Bosch SBV63M00AU (\$2149) is technically similar and should perform the same on the test program.

(C) The Bosch SMS69M02AU (\$1899) is technically similar and should perform the same on the test program.

(D) Has height-adjustable cup racks.

(E) Cannot be selected by user – wash cycle is chosen by auto-sensing program.

(F) Controls are on the top of the door (not the front) like a fully integrated model.

HOW WE TEST

Go to choice.com.au/dishwashers for full details on how we test.

Washing performance CHOICE

testers Graham Byrne, Petr

Valouch and Mohamed Jawahir

place equal amounts of egg yolk,

spinach and baby cereal on

plates, butter on saucers, tomato

juice in glasses and tea in cups.

They also put egg yolk and cereal

on cutlery. All are left to dry for

15–18 hours before being washed

(using the sensor program if the

machine has one, or normal cycle

if not) and dried. Each machine

is tested at least twice and the

scores averaged. The score is

based on the number of specks

of food left on the dishes or the

area of the larger stains.

Note: often the program we

choose is not the same as the

one used for energy and water

rating labels – these tend to

be eco programs, but most

members tell us they use

the normal program.

Drying performance is based

on the number of drops and/or

streaks left on the dishes half

an hour after the end of the

wash. There are no plastic

items in our load as these

take a very long time to dry.

Water and energy efficiency

We measure the amount of water

and energy used in a cycle, and

the time taken.

What to look for

See **CHOICE**, May 2011, page

62, or go to choice.com.au/

dishwashers, where you'll

also find missing models

that do not appear in

this table.



Nutshell

- We identify reasonably priced rotary and foil models that tick most boxes.
- Electric shaver cleaning stations are noisy, fiddly and don't make cleaning easier.

Smooth operator

Which electric shavers deliver portability, convenience, speed and a smooth shave, asks **Martha Psiroukis**.

Any electric shaver user will tell you that although they don't provide as close a shave as a manual razor, their convenience is worth the compromise – you can shave quickly anywhere, any time, with no nicks, grazes or cuts. We recruited four regular electric shaver users from our lab and content teams, each with differing hair and skin types, to find one that comes close to a manual razor's smooth finish. Two users tested rotary shavers and two assessed foil shavers on dry skin at least twice for both one-day and two-day growth.

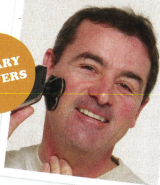
All our testers disliked the shaver cleaning stations. They're fiddly to use, noisy and take a long time using unnecessary power to do a job that can easily and quickly be done under a tap. All shavers with cleaning stations had instructions on how to clean the unit without one (as you're likely to do when travelling), making the stations unnecessary.

Each tester had different preferences, so we've listed their profiles and personal top picks (see opposite and page 64). ►

FEATURES AND SPECIFICATIONS										
	Quick charge	Mains and battery powered	Trimmer	Wet shave	Washable	Docking / cleaning station	Travel pouch	Low battery indicator	On / off switch lock	Claimed charge time (hours)
ROTARY										
Philips SensoTouch 2D RQ1160	✓		✓(C)	✓	✓	✓/-	✓	✓	✓	1
Philips SensoTouch 3D RQ1280CC	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓/✓	✓	✓	✓	1
Remington Diamond 360 SR9130A	✓	✓	✓		✓	-/-	✓	✓		1.5
Philips HQ6900 (A)	na					-/-		na		na
Remington Titanium 360 R3130AH (B)	na		✓			-/-	✓	na		na
FOIL										
Braun Series 5 Smooth & Precise 590cc-3	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓/✓ (D)	✓	✓		1
Panasonic Pro-Curve ES8109	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓/✓ (D)	✓	✓		1
Braun Series 3 Wet & Dry 340	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓/-		✓		1
Panasonic ES-RW30			✓	✓	✓	✓/-				8
Panasonic ES-LA83	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓/✓ (D)	✓	✓	✓	1
Remington Titanium Pivot & Flex F4790 (B)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-/-	✓	✓		2
Remington Titanium Pivot & Flex F7790	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-/-	✓	✓		2

NOTE: For Using the Tables and Table Notes, see page 65. To see how the shavers rated overall, see table on page 65.

ROTARY SHAVERS



Denis

Coarse hair and normal skin

- Shaves four times per week
- Electric shaver user for 18 years
- Uses an electric shaver because it's "convenient and faster to use when not showering beforehand (for example, a quick shave before going out)."
- Prefers rotary because "my preferred brand only makes these."
- Most important: "The most important factor to me is a close shave with the ability to get to all areas on my face, leaving it smooth with as little redness as possible."

I also want my shaver to be quiet, easy to clean and rechargeable."

- Least important: "Least important factors include price [if it's good enough I'll pay more] and a sideburn trimmer - I find a quick trim with a blade shaver does a better job."

TOP PICK

Philips SensoTouch 3D
RQ1280CC, \$600

Likes "Very smooth cut and very easy to clean. Didn't need as many passes over areas for a good shave and could reach all areas of my face."

Dislikes "A bit noisier than my current shaver but not a deal-breaker." Denis also doesn't like the cleaning station that's used with

cleaning solution - "it's fiddly and next to useless. I also don't like how it locks you in to buy Philips products when all the shaver needs is a good rinse under the tap."

Denis also rated the SensoTouch 2D RQ1160 as his top pick, but wouldn't buy it as the trimmer is fiddly to use.



To find out about the rest of the electric shavers and for shaving tips, go to choice.com.au/shavers

Battery type	Weight (g)	Contact	Price (\$)
Li-ion	168	philips.com	260
Li-ion	177	philips.com	600
Li-ion	230	remington-products.com	184
Li-ion	143	philips.com	70
Li-ion	165	remington-products.com	59
Li-ion	195	braun.com/au	398
Li-ion	172	panasonic.com.au	330
NiMH	214	braun.com/au	199
NiMH	157	panasonic.com.au	100
Li-ion	202	panasonic.com.au	550
Li-ion	235	remington-products.com	59
Li-ion	236	remington-products.com	154



Graham

Coarse hair and sensitive skin

- Shaves two-three times per week
- Electric shaver user for five years
- Uses an electric shaver because it's "faster and there's less need for extras such as shaving cream".
- Prefers rotary because he "finds a closer, more comfortable shave, with less pulling in particular".
- Most important: "Its ability to deliver a good result - even on a beard with two or three days' growth as I'm a little haphazard with my shaving regimen. Low skin irritation, portability, cordless functionality and ease of cleaning."

- Least important: "I'm not interested in fiddly cleaning docks that require cleaning solutions - it's an extra cost and hassle - and although a decent beard trimmer would be of some benefit, in my experience, most trimmers are totally useless. Purchase price and ongoing maintenance costs are also minor considerations."

TOP PICK

Remington Diamond 360 SR9130A, \$184

Likes "Smooth result, ease of cleaning, battery remaining indicator, nice to hold. In my opinion, it's the best on test."

Dislikes "Trimmer was largely ineffective."



ROTARY SHAVERS

FOIL SHAVERS



Scott

Fine hair and normal skin

- Shaves every day
- Electric shaver user for 30 years
- Uses an electric shaver for "convenience. When I was younger, I preferred to shave in my bedroom rather than fight for the mirror and sink in the bathroom."
- Prefers foil because "I started out using a foil type that was a gift. I tried



a rotary once and wasn't impressed."

- Most important: Must be a foil type, which gives a good, comfortable and close shave. Easy to clean – ie being able to rinse it under a running tap."
- Least important: "I think the cleaning station concept is a very wasteful gimmick and would avoid them."

TOP PICK

Panasonic Pro-Curve ES8109, \$330

Rotary shavers use two or three rotating heads to lift and cut the hair. **Foil shavers** use oscillating blades beneath a perforated foil to cut the hair.



Likes "If it were available without the cleaning station, I'd buy it."



Dislikes "Cleaning station! It's similar to the Panasonic ES-LA83's – fiddly and messy to set up and change. Simpler to just clean under a running tap with a little liquid soap."

Scott rated the Panasonic ES-LA83 highly for performance and comfort and noted its speed, but its lack of ease of use was a sore point.

Chris

Medium hair and sensitive skin

- Shaves six times per week
- Electric shaver user for 10 years
- Uses an electric shaver because it's "convenient – and means fewer cuts and rashes".
- Prefers foil because "rotary shavers cause rashes and pain".
- Most important: "Comfort – many electric shavers cause my skin to react, leaving it dry and with an itchy rash. Efficiency – it's rare for an electric shaver to provide as close a shave as a blade, so they have to do a reasonable job faster and with less mess. Noise – some are just too noisy to use without the whole street being aware it's on. Cleaning – is both a convenience and hygiene issue. Ergonomics – the shaver has to fit my hand so that I can maintain the correct angle for the most efficient shave. Battery life – especially when I'm travelling."

- Least important: "Looks – it's about function over form for me – and brand. Fancy cleaning tools that cost a bomb and take hours to do a two-minute job."

TOP PICKS

Panasonic ES-LA83, \$550



Likes "Very smooth – would definitely buy."



Dislikes "Head is very large, and it's possible to switch it off by mistake when shaving [you can use the on/off lock switch to avoid this]. Auto cleaning is very messy and takes a long time."

Braun Series 5 Smooth & Precise 590cc-3, \$398



Likes "Easy to use and effective."



Dislikes "Auto cleaning process is noisy, time-consuming and wastes energy. Much easier to wash under a tap." Note: Scott also rated this shaver well for performance, but also didn't like the cleaning station – see table opposite for details.



FOIL SHAVERS



WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Battery powered models are very convenient – you can shave anywhere with one. Some use a nickel metal hydride (NiMH) rechargeable battery; most use lithium-ion (Li-ion) batteries, which are claimed to be just as effective and lighter than NiMH.

A **beard trimmer** is particularly important if you don't shave very often, as trimming a longer growth is recommended before shaving. The Philips SensoTouch 2D RQ1160 has a separate trimmer head

rather than an integrated, pop-up one, which one of our testers found fiddly.

A **wet shave option** allows you to use water or a shaving balm or oil to minimise irritation. You can also shave in the shower with this option.

Washable You should be able to clean your shaver under a running tap.

A **docking/cleaning station** can provide a convenient base to recharge your shaver and may also incorporate a cleaning solution to ensure your shaver will be as

good as new every morning. One model on test has two separate units. However, cleaning stations aren't all they're cracked up to be and can lock you in to buying branded cleaning solutions when all the shaver needs is a good clean under the tap. All our testers found them wasteful, fiddly and unnecessary, and that rinsing the shavers under running water was quicker and just as effective.

A **charging indicator** helps ensure your shaver will be ready to use at all times.

PERFORMANCE

		Tester	Overall impression	Ease of use	Performance	Comfort	Closeness	Evenness	Ease of cleaning
ROTARY									
GOOD	Philips SensioTouch 2D RQ1160	Graham	★★★★	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
		Denis	★★★★	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
	Philips SensioTouch 3D RQ1280CC	Graham	★★★★	Poor	Good	Good	Good	Good	Poor
		Denis	★★★★	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
OK	Remington Diamond 360 SR9130A	Graham	★★★★★	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
		Denis	★★★★	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
	Philips HQ6900 (A)	Graham	★★★★	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
		Denis	★★★	Good	Good	Good	OK	Good	Poor
POOR	Remington Titanium 360 R3130AH (B)	Graham	★★★	Good	OK	OK	Good	OK	Good
		Denis	★★	Good	Poor	Poor	OK	OK	Poor
FOIL									
GOOD	Braun Series 5 Smooth & Precise 590cc-3	Scott	★★★★	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
		Chris	★★★★	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
	Panasonic Pro-Curve ES8109	Scott	★★★★	Good (E)	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good (E)
		Chris	★★★★	Good	Good	Good	Good	OK	Good
OK	Braun Series 3 Wet & Dry 340	Scott	★★★	OK	Good	Good	Good	Good	Poor
		Chris	★★★★	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
	Panasonic ES-RW30	Scott	★★★	Good	OK	Good	Good	OK	Good
		Chris	★★★★	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
MIXED	Panasonic ES-LA83	Scott	★	Poor	Good	Good	Good	Good	Poor
		Chris	★★★★★	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
POOR	Remington Titanium Pivot & Flex F4790 (B)	Scott	★★★	OK	OK	Good	Good	OK	Good
		Chris	★★	OK	OK	Poor	OK	Poor	OK
	Remington Titanium Pivot & Flex F7790	Scott	★★★	OK	OK	Good	Good	OK	OK
		Chris	★★	Poor	Poor	Poor	Good	Poor	Poor

USING THE TABLES Scores Each shaver was rated for overall impression, as well as ease of use, performance and comfort – the maximum rating is five stars. Our testers considered the following for one- and two-day growth: **Ease of use** Cleaning, noise level, vibration, handling comfort; **Performance** Speed, closeness of the shave, effectiveness, evenness, and look of the face after shaving; **Comfort** Any pulling of the hair, grazes or nicks, skin feel, and skin comfort. **Features** See What to Look For, above. **Price** Recommended retail as of June 2011. **TABLE NOTES** na Not applicable. ns Not stated. (A) Limited distribution. (B) Discontinued, but may be available in some stores. Price listed is the price we paid. (C) Not integrated – it's a separate head. (D) Combined unit (E) Without cleaning station.

DON'T FORGET!

Sunday

4

SEPTEMBER

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

August							October						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	30	31					
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
29	30	31					22	23	24	25	26	27	28

2011

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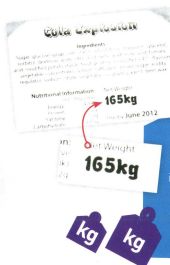
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NEVER RUN OUT OF EGGS AGAIN!

THE NEVER-DIMINISHING DOZEN

Put this in your fridge next to that never-ending pack of Tim Tams.



Sweet labour

165kg? Phillip Bonner believes it's a testament to the strength and durability of his CHOICE calico bag that he managed to lug these lollies home.

Hard Word

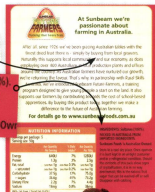


Raw deal for roos

Luckily, this 'Aussie' hairspray is actually made in the States from US and/or imported ingredients. Would we really allow part of our coat of arms to be applied to people's hair?

by buying from local growers.

INGREDIENTS: Sultanas (100%)
PACKED IN AUSTRALIA FROM IMPORTED INGREDIENTS.
Sunbeam Foods is Australian Owned



Soured grapes

On closer inspection, this seems a less-than-fruitful partnership for Aussie farmers.



Room for improvement?

How do you hang a picture with this 88-piece picture hanging assortment? We've sent these down to the CHOICE labs for further investigation.



Thanks this month go to Clare Chandler, Alison Wheldon, Phillip Bonner, Jennifer Gilchrist and Caroline Hurle.

If you have any examples you think should be shared with other CHOICE members, send them with your full name to The Hard Word, CHOICE, 57 Carrington Road, Marrickville, NSW 2204. Please don't email us your entries - we need the unmarked originals.